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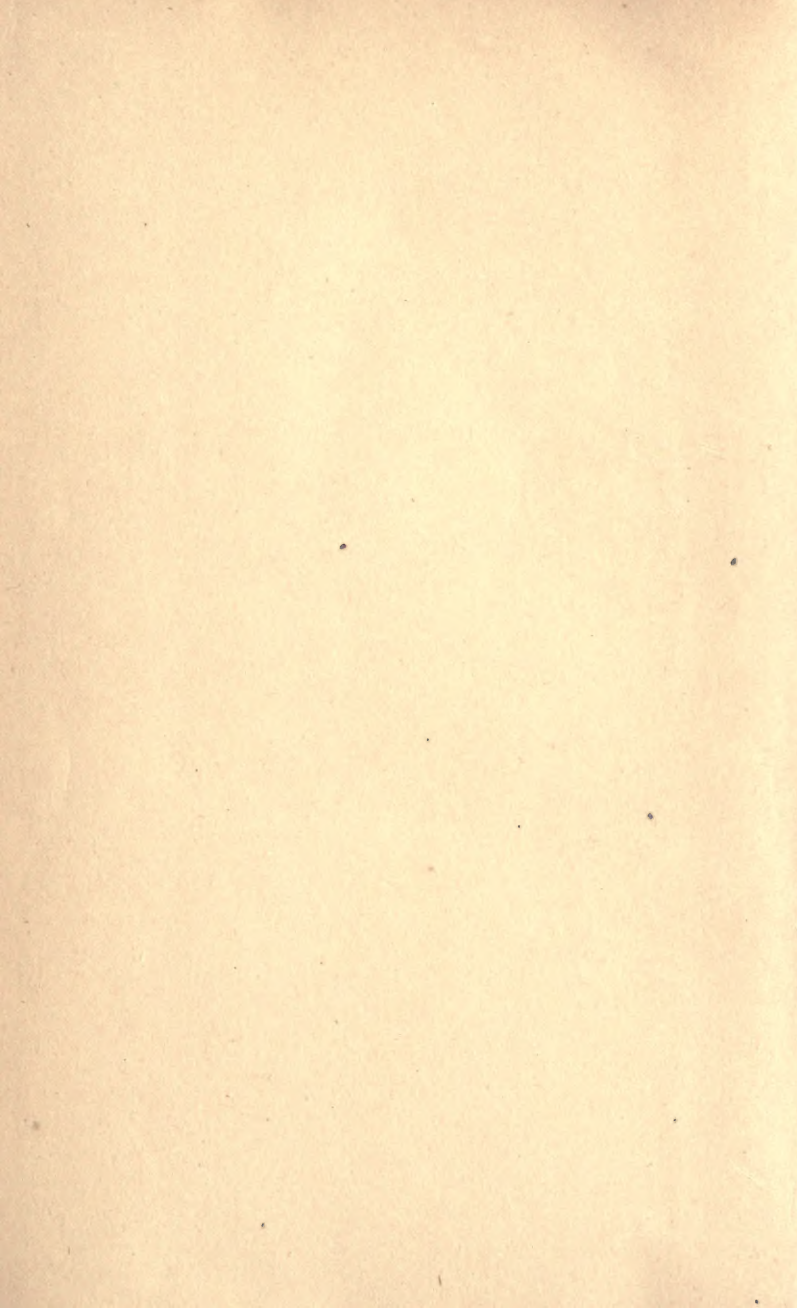
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Crucifixion as it really existed and as described by the Fathers of the Church, and not as exaggerated and falsified by the mere fancy of Artists and Poets of modern times.

A RATIONAL VIEW
OF
JESUS AND RELIGION.

EMBRACING AN EXAMINATION OF THE ORIGIN AND RATIONALE OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND OF THE CLAIMS OF SUPERNATURALISM AND
REVEALED RELIGIONS; AND A SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERIES
ENSHROUDING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE BIRTH,
LIFE, CHARACTER, AND SUPPOSED MIRACLES
AND RESURRECTION OF ITS FOUNDER.

BY

E. W. McCOMAS.

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A RATIONAL VIEW

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JESUS AND RELIGION.

PREFACE.

EMBRACING AN EXAMINATION OF THE ORIGIN AND RATIONALE OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND OF THE CLAIMS OF SUPERSTITION AND
REVEALED RELIGIONS; AND A COLLATION OF THE MYSTERIES

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NEW YORK:

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have attempted to give an exposition of the views at which I have arrived, (after many experiences and much thought,) upon the origin and significance of men's religious beliefs, and especially with regard to the mysteries surrounding the origin, faith and founder of that phase of religious development known as Christianity.

The work has no pretensions to erudition or literary merit. If it has merit of any kind, it consists in its direct, rational and candid methods and its unbiased and truthful conclusions—in its giving the essential truth and true reasons in a frank and fearless manner. This seemed to the author to be what was most needed: and this he has endeavored to supply. The object has been, not to give the reader religious information, since that is abundantly supplied, but to aid him to an insight into the "true inwardness" of facts already accessible. The author does not flatter himself that success, even in his aims, will render the work popular or interesting, inasmuch as the real, unvarnished truth on subjects upon which men's bias, partisanship and prejudice are so ex-

treme as in matters of religion, is rarely palatable or charitably judged. Men are rarely so interested in right thinking as in agreeable thinking, or in correcting their opinions as in defending them, or in the prolonged statements and reasonings necessary to insure correct conclusions as in new facts and fine writing. For these difficulties, however, the author has no remedy consistent with his success in reaching his true object. The very purpose is to oppose prepossessions and to supply that candid and unbiased thinking which, if it were agreeable and popular, would long since have been supplied ; and, had the author the power to add attractive adornments to his plain expositions and reasonings, they would only divide the attention of the reader and gain credit for the author at the expense of his purpose : results that are by no means desirable. The object has been, not to write a fine book or to persuade people into particular religious notions, but to furnish correct thought and true conceptions and reasons for those who are desirous of such aid. The spangles, indeed, which an anxious and extreme desire to avoid all possible error and even doubtful truths place upon the mind, are antagonistic to fine writing. To row against the current requires force, and not fancy. Most persons are concerned, not to ascertain the truth in relation to religion, but to successfully maintain the religion they inherit or prefer ; and they feel and act as if their faith or belief as to the facts could affect the facts themselves. To those who really prefer to thus blind themselves to the real facts of nature, I must frankly say—" Let the book alone : it will not aid you in such a purpose :—it is not safe for you." Those, however, who are desirous or

willing to know the real truth for the sake of being right, will hardly fail to find substantial aid in attaining their desires if they can command the patience to indulge in a careful and appreciative examination of the views and reasoning advanced,—a patience especially demanded by the condensed statements of the first chapter. With this hope, I remain their obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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A RATIONAL VIEW OF JESUS AND RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

MEN'S religious beliefs are measured by their development and education,—chiefly by their capacity to comprehend the nature and source of causation and the various potencies and manifestations in Nature and their connection with the origin, life and destiny of man. Such beliefs have their source and controlling support in man's *imperishable love of life and his aspirations for a higher, a harmonious, and an assured individual existence*. This fundamental, personal life-aspiration is persistent and controlling in all phases of human development, and constitutes the primal fountain of all human motives and the mainspring of all human endeavor and progress, as Mr. Hebert Spencer has so fully and ably shown. No amount of education can eradicate it. No belief which attempts to either oppose or ignore it can either be general or of long duration. The develop-

ment of human intelligence itself is, directly or remotely, the result of this same love of continued and progressive personal life and personal identity, and all beliefs must ultimately conform to it.

The beliefs in an immortal soul and in a God are so connected and so largely interdependent, that a belief in our own immortality immeasurably strengthens our belief in a God; so that the belief in Deity is, also, by this connection with the Soul-idea, strongly and persistently buttressed and supported by this fundamental life-aspiration. Man cannot, and ought not, to give up his belief in either. Under the influence of this fundamental and controlling aspiration and with such light as has been possible to him, he has, through all ages, continued to stretch forth his arms towards an unknown future and an Unknown Power. When old beliefs have become indefensible and untenable under the assaults of Reason and Development, the Few may have rushed out into the night and darkness of Negation, but the mass of mankind have ever refused to yield the shelter of their old faiths until supplied with new ones. Their notions of God and immortality may be *changed*, but the belief in their *existence* cannot be given up. The human soul cannot live upon negation. Its natural life-food is affirmative belief. Materialism and Atheism are the starvation of the Soul. Reason is first destructive, before it is reconstructive. Skepticism finds its legitimate but limited office in making manifest our miscon-

ceptions and the necessity of a reconstruction of our beliefs :—an office merely negative and destructive, yet necessary to progress. It undermines existing creeds : it cannot destroy either the facts or the resistless desire to know them. It destroys only to be asked “ If not this, what then ? ”

Man has not erred in his fundamental aspirations and aims, since they are higher than his intelligence and stronger than his volition—are the fountains of both of them. God and Immortality are secure beyond all human error or control. The general belief in them will always be impregnable ; while the real *fact* of their existence is unaffected by human notions and creeds. Our present error lies, not in recognizing their existence, but in fostering and forcing notions of God and of the soul and of future states which we have inherited from by-gone ages of ignorance and superstition— notions antagonistic to our advanced intelligence and unworthy of our high civilization ; and also in basing our faith upon evidences which can no longer command the respect, much less the support, of our own reason. We err in clinging to the methods and thoughts of an ignorant and infantile Past which are no longer really credible and realizable to us, and still more in endeavoring to force its crude notions upon the plastic and credulous minds of our children, and thus closing them to all rational doubt,—the only road to further investigation and higher light. We so fear to loose our hold upon

these great truths, that we act as if *our notions* of them had some effect upon the *fact* of their existence ; and we would bar all doubt and question of them, lest they should be proved not to exist at all, and thus escape us forever. We had rather blindly believe than risk the chance of doubt. This very fear is not only a barrier to all progress, but is proof of our own conscious weakness and craven, but smothered, fears. If we had a rational and assured faith we should court and defy investigation. Our timid fears and coward hopes are the strongest barriers to their own relief and to the securing of those higher conceptions which an exhaustive and rational investigation must inevitably bring. We yet need to realize the simple truths that facts are not controlled by our opinions and that the primordial and persistent tendencies of Nature are never mistakes,—however *we may mistake them*. Religion is imperishable, since it is based upon the ultimate facts, purposes and end of all evolution ; but creeds and notions ought to, and must, vary with the progressively changing altitude and range of man's mental vision.

Progressive peoples—those to whom God has entrusted the vanguard and standards of the advancing columns of Humanity,—are not permitted to enjoy the repose of inherited beliefs. Rest comes not until they can repose in the absolute conviction of the ultimate truth. Their very progress consists in the acquisition of a *higher* knowledge and *truer* morality. And how-

ever unpleasant it may be to drift from our present moorings and provisional havens, and to battle with the storms of Doubt upon the open sea of Speculation, or to tempt the dangers of untried deeps, we have no alternative when the very foundations of our old anchor-beds are swept away by the mighty currents of Progress. Let us never fear, however, that either God or the Soul will cease to exist because we have approached them through a false channel. The Continent to which the facts of Nature pointed Columbus did not cease to exist because his own labors ended in the island of St. Domingo.

In reviewing and estimating the religious or theological notions of Humanity under the new lights of Evolution, we should be unhampered by the invariable, but ever varied and conflicting, claims of existing Faiths to special and exclusive infallibility by reason of their several pretended divine revelations. For, independent of the utter irrationality and impossibility of such revelations, a true conception of the nature and origin of such beliefs, must at once relegate the whole to the ordinary grade of mere human conceptions. An impartial and rational review of the evidences in this regard can leave no true reason to doubt that all existing beliefs have a common origin in human nature itself, and are the necessary outgrowths of man's primal and childish ignorance and his subsequent progressive enlightenment.

Fortunately, Nature has furnished ample evidence of her methods and progressive steps in this religious development of man. Firstly : we are furnished with the ascending gradation of intelligence among existing races and peoples, with the appropriate phases of religious belief for each grade. Secondly : we are furnished the progressive gradation in Time, exhibited by the histories of enlightened races and peoples, showing the progressive, intellectual and religious phases through which they have passed. Each of these gradations shows the fact that each phase of intelligence and progress has its corresponding and appropriate phase of religious beliefs, and also the fact that there is a real and substantial correspondence in the religious conceptions and notions of all peoples in the same stage of development, and that such conceptions and notions are, in fact, natural resultants of the given phase of development, with proper allowance for differences of race and conditions. Thirdly : we have another exhibition of the character, order and course of intellectual development and of the resultant and accompanying phases of religious conceptions, in the mental history of enlightened individuals, during their progress from infancy to manhood. Fourthly : we have the *necessary* order and mode of acquiring human knowledge and conceptions, consequent upon their very nature and origin and the nature and unity of the soul. The human Soul being a personal unit, can only be conscious and efficient *as a unit*—can only think and act upon one thing at a time, and therefore must acquire its entire knowledge by serial and successive impressions and thoughts. Its entire knowledge of objective existence and of the facts, laws and

relations of Being must originate in separate individual experiences. It commences its career, both in the individual and in the race, in absolute ignorance of all things save itself ; and is compelled to win its way to knowledge, and to even the power to know, by separate, serial individual experiences and activities. From the very nature of the relative and experimental knowledge thus derived, it is *consecutive and dependent* and can only be acquired and comprehended in a *certain serial and consecutive order*,—that is to say, in the order from unity to multiplicity, from simplicity to complexity, from the concrete to the abstract, from the simple to the general. The human mind is *compelled* to commence with the a. b. c. of everything, and to win its way up by a progressive course of consecutive, serial accretions, abstractions and generalizations in which each progressive achievement is the *product of prior acquisitions*. It cannot comprehend *two*, without first comprehending *one*. It can form no conception without first comprehending the elements and relations involved in, or constituting, that conception. Naturally it does, and, unaided, it must, in all cases, “crawl before it can walk.” It is not only a fact, therefore, but a necessity, that man should have primarily acquired his conceptions of causation and his generalizations of natural sequences in an approximately definite and consecutive order ; since in a certain order *alone* was it possible for him to have comprehended them. And, although certain facilities may be added by development and instruction, the same general order of evolution of ideas and of mental progress must still continue to be followed by every individual infant born even among enlightened peoples. Consequently, we must

rationality expect, and shall actually find, that there are certain phases of belief touching causation and unseen powers and agencies, which are natural to certain corresponding stages of intellectual development, and that there is a certain corresponding order as well as family likeness in the successive phases of religious beliefs both among individuals and races. The stage of development governs, and therefore assimilates, their ideas. And we find, not only that men are best satisfied and subserved by the phase of religious beliefs and practices peculiar to their own stage of development, but that they are really capable of comprehending and appreciating no higher ones. We may nominally convert Savage races to a higher religion, but their real, fundamental conceptions will, at best, prove to be only newly-named and slightly-modified types of their old ones, and must still take their measure from their own intellectual and moral status, and be superimposed upon their old substratum of superstitious notions. The Christ and Triune God of the converted Feejee are not identical conceptions with those of Dean Stanley or Dr. McCosh. Their conceptions, though nominally the same, differ as widely as do their developments. And we find Voudouism and sorcery still holding sway over the nominal Colored Christians in the rice fields of South Carolina as it does over their Mohammedan brethren in Central Africa and over their original fetichistic brethren on the Congo.

The rational conclusion from the evidence derived from each and all of these sources is uniform and conclusive,—each pointing to the same general order of

intellectual and religious progression and to the same natural succession of phases of belief. The child's thoughts and the boy's thoughts, after making the necessary allowances for race-development, education and special influences, are the same in grade and similar in character in all times and in all lands ; and the Savage Wild-man, to-day, thinks the thoughts and dreams the dreams that floated through the brains of the ancestors of the men of the Stone Age. Then, as now, the primitive Wild-man was, morally and intellectually, the simple Child-man. The nature of man's knowledge, the progressive steps of his individual and race progress, the ascending scale of race-developments in the existing phases of human societies or peoples, and the historical scale of progression of all races in their natural ascent from savageism, all show that men's religious beliefs are a natural and law-governed product of their mental development and condition, and necessarily change with the progressive phases of their intellectual and moral growth. And as each phase of religious belief is an outgrowth of its corresponding phase or stage of development, it cannot be irrational, incongruous, or detrimental to the very intelligence from which it grew, but must, of necessity, *fit* it, and be conformed to it, like the bark of a tree or the shell of a mollusk. The incongruities and absurdities in primitive and lower beliefs which are patent to *us*, are hidden from those who entertain them ; while equally gross irrationalities existing in our own popular or personal beliefs now go unchallenged by ourselves.—only to be smiled at in the future.

What men will treat and worship as their God is

determined by what, as they conceive, causes and controls their own being and destiny and is the author of those acts and influences in nature which affect their lives and happiness. *How* they will treat and worship their Gods, will depend upon their notions of the supposed nature, powers and character of the objects or beings worshipped and of their relations with, and inclinations towards, themselves, and these will depend upon their stage of development. The primary purpose of worship was the *propitiation or control* of the causal or controlling beings, and the *mode* and *means* of propitiation or control were those which were supposed to be most suitable and efficient for the purpose of controlling or influencing a being of the conceived nature and character of the being or object thus worshipped or propitiated. Time, locality and race have had no marked substantial influence upon the nature and order of such religious beliefs and methods. Through many minor variations substantially the same progressive phases and order of beliefs have always and everywhere been manifested; and this law-governed order and character of religious progress is often strikingly manifested by the specific similitudes in the religious notions, rites, customs and symbols of people widely separated in time, space and race.

Nature unfolds *all things* by a law-governed process of self-evolution. Mental progress, including moral and religious development, furnishes no exception to this

necessary and universal method. The Present is ever a transformation of a continuously transformed Past. The entire Past is but a practical demonstration of the Present—is the Present in embryo. In her physical evolutions, Nature's *materials* are fixed in amount, and she forever knits, unravels, and re-knits the same materials into ever brighter and more complex patterns. In her evolution of *intelligence*, on the contrary, her material or means is ever improving and her progress cumulative ; and she is ever, not only transforming the Old, but superimposing and improving the New. The tree of knowledge and of intellectual life is ever germinating new buds, and the old and changing form is ever comingling with, and merging into, new and growing germs :—the whole having a common primordial tap-root and vital support. New Religions may present new conceptions of morals and duty and of modes and objects of worship, or may give higher assurances to human aspirations, but they are ever the legitimate offspring of older religions, and are rarely ever more than mere reconstructions and modifications of older and borrowed forms and beliefs. The dogmas, rites and ceremonies, as well as the marvels, myths and legends by which they are supported, which now swell the great on-flowing current of religious thought and life, have been gathered in, through the successive ages, from the countless rivulets of the by-gone thoughts and life-modes of the generations. Many of these primitive notions, forms, symbols and legends, although now fused into our composite beliefs and customs, are still recognizable, like the grains of quartz and feldspar in a mass of granite ; while others, crystallized by time, still float on uncrushed,

like stray ice-floes upon an ocean current. The youths of Great Britain, even now, annually perform rites once sacred to Baal, and indulge in scores of customs and incantations inherited from the Druids and from the worshippers of Balder and Odin. There was scarcely a Jewish notion from that of a belief in witchcraft and devil-possession—not a rite from Circumcision to blood-offerings—nor a symbol, from the breast-plate of the High-Priest to the winged cherubim or symbolic beast upon the ark of the covenant, which was not borrowed or imitated from those of their masters of Egypt, Persia or Chaldea or from other conquering or neighboring peoples. There is scarcely a single Christian belief from that in a divine incarnation to the belief in a queen of Heaven and a triple God—not a rite from baptism to sacrificial feasts—not a legend from that of the Golden Age in Eden to that of a universal deluge,—nor a moral precept or principle, which had not already been substantially believed in or practiced long before the advent of Christianity. It could not, indeed, have been otherwise. Even if these facts were not historically demonstrable, it is impossible to rationally believe that a people, like the Jews, who had been for so many centuries in personal as well as political bondage to peoples of superior knowledge and civilization—a people whose laws, rites and ceremonies had been first established by one who had been educated by the Egyptian priests, and whose religious ideas and beliefs took shape and mould under the pressure of such controlling influences, could fail to have a borrowed and composite religion. That the moral and religious ideas and doctrines promulgated in the New Testament were well understood and taught, in many lands, as well as in

Judea, long before the reign of Herod the Great, is beyond rational doubt. That Jesus of Nazareth himself was singularly indifferent to all forms, ceremonies and rituals is still more certain. And the fact that he *was* so, furnished an ample reason why his followers should have accommodated their doctrines to the popular forms and customs of those whom they desired to proselyte, and should have modified and appropriated these accustomed rituals and symbols of the people to the use of their new Church. Jesus was not only indifferent to forms, but expressly accepted the established Jewish religion, and endeavored to infuse his own ideas and spirit into its existing laws. He professed to re-interpret and supplement rather than to overthrow. His successors followed his example, and wisely won their way by being "all things to all men," and by cheerfully accommodating their new spirit to the accustomed rites, ceremonies and symbols of both Jew and Pagan,—yielding *form* for the sake of *substance*. Those features and doctrines which distinguished the Christian religion from the religion from whose bosom it sprung and from the surrounding religions and philosophies of the Roman Empire, were chiefly Buddhistic in their character and perhaps in their origin. Its spirit and morality was essentially Buddhistic. So that, in a broad sense, it may be characterized as the infusion of the Spirit and ideas of Buddhism into the modified body and forms of the religions and philosophies of the Roman Empire,—the whole engrafted on a tap-root of Judaism. Like all other religions—it was an evolution a new progressive outgrowth from existing beliefs and customs; and whether its theological notions and its mystic rights and

characteristic moralities were borrowed from one source or another, it is certain they were, in the main, not pure *inventions*, but *grew* up, and took their nutriment from those older beliefs, symbols and customs which had grown, like wild flowers, fresh from the growing aspirations, desires, sympathies and intelligence of successive generations. Even the legends and myths concerning Jesus personally, are largely moulded from borrowed materials. Combine, modify and reform as it may, or might, its ancestral flesh-marks remain, and the odor of the soil from which it sprung still clings about it. The magic effects produced by the mere *name* "Jesus," by the chips of the true cross, by sacred shrines and consecrated bells, by the bones of pious anchorites, by the blood-stained garments of martyrs, and by the toe-nails and other relics of Saints, as well as its witchcraft and devil-possession, give forth even odors of Fetichism which it is impossible to rationally misconceive, and which point to an origin in the grimmest and remotest past. To that past let us turn for their true origin and significance.

ORIGIN OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS.

Man's earliest and lowest mental condition cannot be directly known, since all existing races of men have already made some progress in mental development ;

and neither their ancestors, nor those of the more civilized races, either did leave, or could have left, any record or evidences of their beliefs; since they were wholly without arts. Still we may, as we have seen, rationally approach the primordial mental condition of our Race by means of our knowledge of the nature of our intelligence and its necessary origin and order of acquisition, aided by the analogies furnished by the mental manifestations and progress of individual childhood. The lowest existing races, however, furnish us examples of mental conditions and development sufficiently primitive for our present purposes,—and, indeed, too low for our clear realization. There still exist races of men who, having the passions and instincts of the brute, are nearly infantile in their mental development and attainments. We still find men (such as the wild Dyaks of Borneo) who have attained no conception of modesty or of the family relations; whose children are begotten, nurtured and abandoned like those of animals; who rave and prowl through the forest and jungle singly, like beasts of prey; who subsist like brutes, and, like brutes, die alone and unburied; who could scarcely command a score of words for their entire vocabulary, or add two to three, or comprehend the simplest moral principles; and who have no religious rites or ceremonies.

The mental condition of even these existing wild-men is scarcely conceivable to us. Outside of their animal appetites and the indiscriminate propagation of their species, their minds are absorbed in their efforts to secure food and to avoid danger. Their one prevailing and ever-haunting emotion is *fear*. Ignorant of the

agencies and laws of Nature, all things either are, or may become, dangerous to them. The *Unknown*, with its swarms of mysterious spirits and menacing shadows, fills the air, the streams, the forest, with enemies which meet him at every turn, and dog his footsteps through life. His real and natural enemies are supplemented by a host of others made so by his ignorance and stupidity; while even this number is inconceivably multiplied by his conception of causation. In direct analogy to his own action he conceives all motions and effects whatever to be personal and voluntary, and regards all objects in nature as having an invisible, conscious self like his own mental self. In every untried object, therefore, there may lurk a foe to be feared, hated and avoided. A wild and restless fear of both visible and invisible foes and of evil spirits pervades his life, and colors all his serious thoughts and conduct. The Unknown is ever an object of dread and hate to him, since it not only *may* be dangerous to him, in known or unknown ways, but his ignorance of it will probably *make* it so; while the very fact of its being unknown makes the danger immeasurable, uncertain, and dreadful.

The question here presented is, whether this wild, haunted savage of the primitive or lowest races, can be said to have a religion. Can we find in this brutal nature and almost brute-intelligence the true germs of the later and higher religions—the seeds even of that religion whose incense once floated over the blood-stained altar at Jerusalem, and of that of its offspring whose

"*Te Deum laudimus*" still thunders through the aisles of St. Peter's? There has been much doubt as to the proper answer to this question. The later and better evidences and authorities, however, would seem to settle the propriety of an affirmative answer. While we have had much incompetent and biased testimony as to the capacity of Savages in this regard, the true difficulty would seem to be one of definition rather than fact. That there are men who have no notion of a God, of Creation, of a First Cause, or of religious *obligations* of any kind, and who pay no worship to *good* Spirits, is beyond rational question. And yet it is equally true, that Religion germinates, and has its root deep down, in this lowest and most childish Savageism. As the seed in the dark earth-mould contains the germ and potency of the lordly forest-tree, even so, in this grim night of human ignorance, we find that fear and hate of the Unknown—of the uncomprehended agencies of nature, which, through the long ages of human development, grew and changed until it ripened into a religion of hope and adoration. As man's ignorance has been gradually transformed into knowledge, his ideas of causation have expanded and his fear of the unknown sources or agencies of natural manifestations has been transformed into confidence and love. That the germs of our religions should be different from, and even opposite to, their developed and final characters, is a result which is natural to Evolution; and however the common, primordial germ may become modified by varying conditions and influences or may be metamorphosed by development, it is as much a part of the common growth and history as the root is a part of the tree.

Passing from the imperfectly understood mental status and condition of the Wild-man to that of the Savage we find that man has here taken a distinct step in social, intellectual and religious development. We find him already on the threshold of the Social State, having some notions of the family relations, also loose political associations governed by patriarchs or chiefs, and some crude notions of morality. Corresponding with this social and intellectual advance we find a religious progression introducing us to the phase of religion known as *Fetichism*. In this stage of development men still regard all causation as personal and voluntary, and continue to consider it as generally direct and immediate, if not wholly so. Their religion is still a religion of fear. In treating of it, Sir John Lubbock says—"We regard the Deity as good; they look upon him as evil; we submit ourselves to him; they endeavor to obtain control over him; we feel the necessity of accounting for the blessings by which we are surrounded; they think, that the blessings come of themselves, and attribute all evil to the influence of malignant beings. These characteristics are not exceptional and rare. On the contrary, I shall attempt to show — (continues Lubbock,) that, though the religions of lower races have received different names, they agree in their general characteristics, and are but phases of one sequence, having the same origin and passing through similar, if not identical stages."

It is almost impossible for us to comprehend the childish notions of the Fetichist—to comprehend how adult men can believe in the existence and hidden power and malignity of the Spirits of what we know to be in-

animate objects, and that all motions and effects are due to direct conscious or voluntary powers residing within the thing apparently initiating them—men who have no conception whatever of natural causation, and but little, if any, of secondary causation. To such men anything may become a fetich or controlling potency. Any chance notion derived from a single coincidence—the merest casual concomitance or an apparent relation between an object and an effect—is sufficient to suggest one, or it may be adopted on trial and be childishly accepted or rejected as chance or success or failure may determine. It may represent a human being, or be a stone or a pebble, some seed or herb, the part of an animal, or any “villanous compound” of animal or vegetable matter. Not only elemental phenomena, but disease, death and personal disasters and good luck are regarded as under the control of these fetichistic agencies,—even the affections, capacities and conduct of individuals. There is also a singular notion of the efficiency of representation accompanying and influencing their notions of Causation. They conceive that parts of a being or thing, or even its name or image represents the whole :—for example, that parts of a courageous animal will give courage to the person using it, or that, by having an image or a bit of the clothing, the hair, or the spittle of a person, they have the means of charming or bewitching them as effectually as if they were personally present. In fact, fetichism is nothing more than primitive and unadulterated sorcery and Witchcraft—a belief that inanimate objects not only have potency for good and evil, but that such potency is due to a hidden spirit within them, in analogy to the conscious *Ego* in

man. It is not to be identified with Idolatry or the worship of divine images, nor with Nature-worship. Fetichism is not real worship or adoration of a good being at all ; but, on the contrary, it is devoted to the circumvention or control of malevolent or inimical beings, or to securing their neutrality, favor or aid.

What it further and mainly behooves us to note in this first step in man's religious development is, that it is the product of, and corresponds with, an equivalent phase of intellectual progress—a phase embracing some vague conceptions of general powers in nature of a personal or conscious character, including some of an indifferent or even friendly nature, and also the experiences and ideas inducing the first rude attempts to aggregate into social and political unions as families and septs ; that it is the inimical powers or spirits, alone, which are propitiated, through fear of the consequences of their enmity—the friendly ones being supposed to be right already ; that their gods, if they can be called such, are beings with like natures, needs, appetites and passions as themselves and are to be influenced and controlled by like means and methods as would be efficient with human enemies ; and that the bribes or propitiatory offerings, consequently, which are presented to them, are such as would be acceptable to themselves or a human enemy,—mainly meats, fruits, rice and other foods, whose hidden spirit they suppose to be as palatable and necessary to their unseen spiritual enemies as the visible portions are to themselves :—a notion exhibited by our ancestors when they sought the houses of, and left food and water for, the fairies, and which is still retained and exemplified

by our Indian tribes, who continue to place food, weapons, &c., in the graves, or near the bodies, of their dead for use after death, well knowing that the visible part of these articles remain unused and undisturbed. In short, to keep his fetich and invisible enemies in a good humor, and to influence them, the Fetichist feeds and flatters, and even scolds, threatens and abuses them according to his notions of their nature :—a favorite mode being to frighten them. Here, we find the germ and origin of religious *sacrifices* or propitiatory offerings to the Gods. In the rain-doctors, witch-doctors, sorcerers and medicine-men who are called forth by this phase of beliefs, we also have the legitimate progenitors of our priests and physicians. In the primitive belief in the substantial reality of dreams and visions and in the superhuman and sacred character of the hallucinations and illusory visions of the morbid and insane, born in this childish age of literalism and appearances, we find, also, the fountains of all future beliefs in *prophecy* and *inspiration*.

A still more advanced phase of Religion is known as *Shamanism*. Here we find, not only a still further generalization of the potencies of Nature, but a vague conception of beings of a *different nature* from that of mortal men-beings of a divine essence and nature. The Gods of the Shamanite are no longer the enemies of man, but neither are they his friends and guardians. They live

remote and apart from humanity and are indifferent to their conduct or affairs. They are unapproachable by ordinary mortals, and can only be communicated with through the medium of a Shaman—a kind of priestly “Convulsionair” or inspired Dervish, who is sometimes, when the fit is on, permitted to have intercourse with them, and to even visit them in their distant abodes. Accompanying this progress in religion and intelligence, we find, also, the corresponding advance in social progress and political generalizations. Shamanism is found flourishing among such vast, barbaric hordes as roam over the undefined countries of central Asia and give an equally undefined allegiance to some distant and unapproachable emperor or khan.

Advancing another step we find Anthropomorphism. In this phase of progress men worship men-shaped Gods—deified Ancestors, Heroes and Benefactors and the personified powers of Nature. Even their highest Gods are still a part of Nature—are its offspring, not its creators. Although endowed with divine and imperishable natures, they have man-like forms, intelligence, frailties, passions and appetites, and human capacities for want and suffering; although these characteristics are variously modified from those of men. It has been plausibly contended, indeed, that the very conception of such Gods arose from the deification of men.

It is in this phase or stage that *idolatry* begins to

play its important part in man's psychical development. By adopting representative images as aids to the sensuous realization of unknown and invisible deities, Religion gave a new and mighty stimulant to intellectual development, by calling forth the genius, and inspiring the energies, of the poet, the sculptor, the painter and the architect in the idealization and representation of imaginary Gods, angels, deified heroes and their achievements, and in the erection of altars and temples for their residence and worship. Idolatry may be said to have been the mother of the fine arts.

It is in this anthropomorphic phase, also, that we find the tendency to generalize and grade personal causation most signally manifested, and witness the process of ultimating secondary causation and natural sequences in First Cause and Creator of all things and a creation by *fiat*. In examining natural phenomena and observing the order and sequences of these natural manifestations, men could not fail to ultimately observe, that there was a more or less regular gradation in the importance of natural objects and causes, and a more or less consecutive subordination and dependence of natural agencies and powers, and that the multiplied manifestations in nature tended to mount up towards common and ever fewer sources. They could not rank the Naiad of the fountain with the Goddess of the Sea, nor Aurora with the God of day.

This tendency towards a final generalization, indeed, must have gradually reached some kind of culmination even under the more distinctly fetichistic conception of

causation, when, as yet, men regarded all objects as self-efficient and all causes alike voluntary and internal. From this standpoint, an observation of the visible phenomena of the Universe would naturally lead men to place the Sun and Earth at the head of the hierarchy of natural powers—the one as masculine, the other feminine. Such a generalization, however, would not be reached without there having arisen some vague suggestions and questionings as to the origin and primal source of all things—some conjectures and vague conceptions of a First Cause or *Unknown* Power existing prior to all visible bodies, or at least dominating them. Thus there was formed the primary strata or plain, as it were, of religious beliefs.

When the more developed minds ceased to believe in the self-efficiency of inanimate objects, or that all things were animate, they necessarily assigned their actions and government to other efficiencies; and as they had no conception of any causation but that which was voluntary, they attributed such actions and control to imaginary, invisible beings, or to personal Gods. This change in the conception or notion of the sources of causation, however, did not materially affect the previous gradation of powers or Gods, further than to more specially define and co-ordinate them; but merely substituted separate personal movers and controllers for the old hidden spirits of the objects themselves and the vague idea of some unknown original Power:—causing a worship of the invisible personal Rulers or Gods of natural phenomena instead of the phenomena themselves. Thus, Apollo and Diana were substituted for Sol and Luna.

As this advanced step, however, would be originally attained by the more advanced minds, it would not destroy the previous popular notions or worship, but would be superimposed upon them ; and there would be, and was, two co-existing and approximately-corresponding hierarchies of Gods ;—the one being that of the phenomenal objects and manifestations themselves, the other that of their supposed invisible Rulers. This would seem to have been both the natural and actual order of intellectual and religious development.

The first tendency and result of this gradation of natural objects and powers was, not to finally unify all causation, but to subordinate and rank the powers of Nature ;—giving a hierarchy of Gods, with a chief or supreme head—a God-of-Gods ; and thus bringing man to the very threshold of Monotheism. From the belief in a Supreme or chief God in nature, the ascent to a belief in a Sole anthropomorphic Creator and Ruler of the Universe may require time and perhaps favoring conditions, but such a result was inevitable unless human development had been wholly arrested. Whenever the human mind departed from its primitive conception of the imminence and directness of causation,—or of self-causation, and accepted the notions of outside causation and secondary or remote causation, by substituting imaginary personal agencies for inherent powers, and taking incitement or inducement and sequence for cause and causation, there could be no final and legitimate pause until a personal First Cause was reached. Anthropomorphic Monotheism seems to have been more definitely and early attained by the Semitic peoples than any other, and it is with its origin among the

Abrahamic branch of that race that we feel the deepest interest, and with which it will be sufficient to here concern ourselves.

ISRAELITISH MONOTHEISM.

We find in the Jewish book of Genesis the early conceptions of the Jews in relation to the general creation, to the nature and character of the Divine Powers and of their relations to man, to the origin of Evil, and to the primal creation and condition or state of man and the causes and order of his earlier steps in knowledge and mental progress ;—all embraced in a supposed history of these early facts and relations, and expressed in that concrete, narrative and figurative form which is alone possible to peoples who are as yet incapable of speaking or even thinking in the abstract. This exposition furnishes us, not only the appropriate and expected phase of beliefs appertaining to the then existing stage of their mental development, but an unusually sagacious notion of the true primitive state of man and of the order and mode of his subsequent progress towards enlightenment. From Genesis we learn, that prior to

Abraham his people were Polytheists, with the taint of Fetichism still strong upon them. We find, that Abraham's father worshipped *other* Gods besides Jehovah-Elohim—the Lord God; and that, even in the time of Jacob, the father of Rebecca had his little household Gods or fetiches, and that his daughter Rebecca greatly outraged him, when leaving the paternal home, by stealing them and hiding them in her “camel furniture.”

Prior to the time of Moses they evidently had not reached a conception of Ultimate Being, but, at best, only an anthropomorphic conception of Supreme or dominant *power*,—represented by the chief of the *Elohim*—the Lord of the Heavenly Host. It was Moses who introduced to them the Egyptian conception of ultimate Essential Existence itself—the “I Am,” who “is, was, and is to be.” This conception is a conception of oneness—an ultimate conception lying back of all impersonations of mere powers or attributes, and formed the true basis of Monotheism. And it is this Egyptian conception, by its mystic and unspeakable name of “Jehovah,” that Moses proposed to the Israelites as the one true and ultimate God, and which he induced them to accept as the “God of their fathers,” although he expressly told them that, *as Jehovah*, he was not known by their fathers,—that is, by His name indicating Ultimate Existence or self-existent Being.

The first account in Genesis of the cosmical creation was written by an author who uses the plural word *Elohim* or Gods to express the Creative Powers, and who was evidently unacquainted with even the name, Jehovah. The *recorder or transcriber* of the second account, being that of the formation of man and of his subsequent condition and history, (abruptly commencing with the 4th verse of the second chapter,) could not have lived earlier than the Mosaic Age, since he was acquainted with the name, Jehovah, and prefixes it to the original *Elohim* to identify him with the old Polytheistic conception of the Supreme Power—the patriarchal Lord of the Heavens. The whole language of the narrative, however, shows that the idea of a plurality of Gods was in the mind of the *original author*. Not only is the plural *Elohim* used to express the personal creating powers, but the Gods are represented as consulting together concerning the creation, and as using language only applicable to a plurality of Gods—such as “now let *us* make man in *our* own image,” * * “and ye shall be as *Gods*,” * * * “Behold, the man has become as *one* of *us*,” and the like expressions of plurality. These palpably plural expressions cannot be explained as referring to a single “Truine God,” since such language is never used by, or about, Jehovah in the writings of subsequent Monotheists, nor was the idea of a trinity ever entertained by any of the Abrahamic peoples.

Such language as was used by the Israelites to Shihon shows that, even at that late period, they recognized the actual existence of other Gods,—namely, “Wilt thou possess that which *thy* God Chemosh *giveth*

thee? So, whomsoever the Lord (Jehovah) *our* God shall drive out before us, them will we possess"—(Judges xxiv. 11). Here then is a distinct recognition of two distinct Gods, each having equal and actual existence and active efficiency. The very fact, indeed, that the Israelites were so constantly prone to fall back upon the worship of the old Gods, is conclusive of the fact of their recent or imperfect conversion from Polytheism and of their inability to appreciate the higher conception and worship of Jehovah, and of their consequent tendency to revert to their old notions and practices. Even Moses seems to respect their hereditary notions in the Decalogue itself. It does not assert, or imply, that there is no other God but Jehovah, but demands that the Israelites shall worship Him, and "have no other Gods *before* Him:" Seeming to imply, rather than deny, the existence of such other Gods. Of a like import is the command, "Thou shalt not revile the *Gods*."—(Exodus xxii. 28.)

The facts would seem to be, that Abraham had been reared in the Chaldean faith in, and worship of, the Heavenly Powers,—chief among whom was Baal, the Sun-God—the Lord of the Heavens; that, being inspired by the idea of becoming the father and founder of a separate People, he "moved West" into Caanan; that, in pursuance of the common custom, he selected

a patron Deity as his special object of worship, inspired by the hope that he should thus secure His special protection and patronage for himself and his descendants; and with a magnanimity worthy of his high aspirations he selected the chief of his ancestral Gods, and vowed that he and his descendants would worship Him, and Him *alone*, in consideration of His special favor and protection; and that, in pursuance of this supposed covenant, when meeting with Melchisedec in Caanan, and finding him to be a priest of this same "*most high God*," he paid tithes to him as the representative of his own chosen God. Thus, it would seem that, while Abraham worshipped but one God, he did not disbelieve in the existence of others, nor conceive that his patron God was Ultimate Existence itself, but the all-powerful Heavenly Ruler.

Having once entered into this perpetual covenant for *practical* Monotheism, the real Monotheistic idea would be the more readily developed. Perpetually covenanted, and exclusively devoted, to one God, and under the sole and potent influence of Moses and of a powerful and vitally-interested hereditary priesthood, who were jealously devoted to the worship of this sole God and were living upon the sacrifices and offerings at His altars, the conception and final triumph of Monotheism could not be doubtful. Once under such potent and exclusive guidance, and fighting for their lives and most sacred interests, through ages of cruel and exterminating wars,

under the sole banner and protection of Jehovah, and against nations worshipping and fighting under other and opposing Gods, the Israelites naturally came to finally regard all other Gods than their own Jehovah as antagonistic and inimical powers—as objects of dread and hatred, and, for these very reasons, as also evil and wicked beings. Thus, the hated Gods of their enemies degenerated into evil beings or devils :—the God Baalzebub or Beelzebub becoming the chief of devils. Thus, the solely-worshipped Jehovah finally came to stand confronting, not “other Gods,” but a hierarchy of devils.

With all the potent Monotheistic influences operating upon them, however, the priests could not prevent the Israelites from exhibiting the strongest proclivity to revert to their old polytheistic notions and practices. It was only when dangers and misfortunes menaced or overwhelmed them, that their fears and enmities fully overcome their old polytheistic proclivities,—to which they again and again yielded.

IMPROVED CONCEPTIONS.

This progress towards the unification and ultimation of causation was accompanied by a marked progress in

their conceptions of the nature and character of their Deity. The difference between the God of the Patriarchs and that of Hilel, Gamaliel and Josephus is even more marked than between that of the latter and the advanced Christians of our time. Beyond the name there was little in common between the earliest and latest Jewish Monotheists. The old, infantile and crude conception has grown out of all realization, if not out of all recognition. We scarcely repress a smile, indeed, when we read the naïve accounts of God's nature, feelings and actions in the earlier Jewish records:—when, for example, we are told that God *walked* about with men and conversed familiarly with them; that after God had made all things and pronounced the whole to be very good, the creatures that He had made, so upset his plans, that He was greatly vexed, and sorely repented that He had made man at all. How very primitive and childlike this is! Or this, again, of Jacob actually wrestling hip-and-thigh with God, and holding God in spite of Himself, after God had broken Jacob's thigh in the tussle! With what unconscious simplicity, again, is it related how Abraham chatted with the Lord about his affairs, and laughed at His promise that Sarah, who was then 90 years of age, should bear a son, until the old man was so convulsed with his sense of the ridiculousness of the idea, that he fell prostrate on the earth;—how the Lord visited Abraham at his tent, sat at his door and washed his feet, ate dinner with the patriarch, and again amused Sarah with the same promise of a son, until *she* laughed until she was scolded for it by the Lord, and then denied it; how at parting with Abraham, God informed him that He was then on his way to Sodom and

Gomorrah to see whether matters at those places were altogether as the "cry had come up to Him." God is not only represented as being under the necessity of washing his feet, of eating food, and of travelling round the country to see whether matters have been rightly reported to him, but as being quite as companionable as He had already proved himself to be handy and useful in the Sartorial line, by making "skin coats" for Adam and Eve!

Moses himself, with his Egyptian learning, was clearly in advance of all such crude notions. True, he is represented as a man who *talked* with God "as a man talketh to his friend." It is also said of him that he desired God to exhibit Himself to him, and that God, a little more exclusive then than in the days of Adam and Abraham, informed him that "no man could look upon His *face* and live," but that he would put Moses in the "cleft of rock" and there cover him with His hand, while He passed by, and that He would take off his hand in passing, and permit Moses to see his "back parts." If Moses ever countenanced such reports, it was doubtlessly with a view to their effect in securing his influence with the superstitious multitude. The progressive exclusiveness here shown was still further developed by the time of St. John, who says that "*no man* has seen God at *any time*,"—either back parts or front parts. Even long after Moses, however, notions of God's occupation and powers are expressed which are quite as anthropomorphic as these. We are informed

(in Judges) that the Lord was aiding Joshua in his military operations, and that He was enabled to drive out the inhabitants of the hill country, "but *could not* drive out the inhabitants of the valley *because* they had chariots of iron ;"—the iron chariots proving an overmatch for the combined efforts of God, Joshua and the "chosen people." All this is quite consistent with the then existing stage of intelligence and development.

Equally crude and childish notions prevailed with regard to the character and morals of their God. These progressively varied with the age and with the individual,—always corresponding to the stage of intellectual development and the influences and education of the time and person. Men who looked upon God as an image of themselves, or rather as the original of which they were the image, would, of necessity, regard Him as subject to the desires, feelings and motives of men. His characteristics would necessarily be moulded and limited by the conceptive powers and desires of His worshippers. In the moral character of the God of the early Israelites, as well as in that of other people's Gods, we find a reflex of the worshipper,—more or less improved or idealized. The God of the Jews was, and must have been, in every age, what the Jew then considered a "pattern man" with extraordinary or supreme capacities. In the earlier and more savage ages, we find him little above a human Prince—with the cruelty, vindictiveness, favor-

itism, vanity, self-laudation, capriciousness, and love of adulation found in barbaric kings and rulers. He was an unscrupulous ally and hot friend, and a remorseless and cruel foe. His motto was "an eye for an eye" and "blood for blood ;"—the doctrine at the bottom of the "blood-feuds" of all barbarians. His worshippers called and considered Him just, and even merciful ; but in *their* view to be merciful was to be helpful and forgiving to the Jew : to be just was to annihilate the enemies of the Jew,—was to rob other people of their lands, property, homes and lives for the benefit of His favorites,—was to exact "the uttermost farthing," to "reap where He had not sown," and to punish the innocent children for the sins of the father, to the tenth generation. Amidst the smoke of incense and the hallelujahs of the multitude we see the gleam of the sacrificial knife at the throat of thousands of innocent victims ; we hear the incessant gurgling of the hot blood-stream from the altar, and witness the desolated homes, and the rotting carcasses of the innocent cattle, wives and children of the fathers and brothers who died defending them and their homes from the aggressive and remorseless favorites of Jehovah. Mighty and merciful art thou, O Jehovah, God of Sabaoth ! Why not ? To *them*, He seemed both good and just. It was their *own acts* they were lauding,—supposed to have been inspired and aided by their God. Thus it has been with all peoples. The ancient Jewish conception of God is even less offensive to us than that of most other peoples in the same stage of development. As they had but one God to represent that which was represented by many Gods to the Polytheist, we must compare him to the whole of the Poly-

theistic host in making our estimate; and, in doing so, we shall find the Jewish conception compares most favorably with that of others. The best of their Gods were very human and imperfect. The God of the Jew has, through Christianity, become largely cosmopolitan, and has continued to improve with the advance of the mental and moral development of His worshippers, and has been largely divested of his partiality and favoritism. There are still many conceptions in relation to Jehovah, however, which are very shocking and savor of their barbaric origin. That these crude, anthropomorphic conceptions of God were formed in analogy to human nature, and confirmed, if not originated, by the deification of human beings is sufficiently clear. How far the latter custom influenced such notions it may be difficult to determine, and is by no means necessary to our purpose.

RELATIONS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

Turning from the Biblical conceptions of the Deity, to the Biblical conception of the relations between God and man, we shall find the following statement of them fairly orthodox, and sufficiently explicit for our present purposes,—namely :

1. That God made man out of the "dust of the earth," and blew breath into his nostrils; that, thus fashioned and vitalized, he was "a little lower than the angels" and in a state of perfect innocence and happiness, enjoying every blessing, without pain, labor or care, and obligated and restrained by only a single duty or command.

2. That man, seduced by the "Serpent," disobeyed this command, and by that disobedience incurred the wrath and curses of his offended Creator, and the penalty of the loss of his innocence and happiness and of his Paradisial home, and entailed the curse of pain and death upon all animated beings, as well as of toil, hereditary guilt, depravity and condemnation on all his own posterity, without power of self-redemption.

3. That this divine penalty was so far modified as to allow man to escape some of its exactions by rigid obedience to the divine laws and by continued sacrifices and blood-offerings to God in discharge of the penalties due for their transgressions: and, as Christians affirm, was further modified by the promise of a future *divine blood-offering* in final discharge of the *debts* of Humanity.

That these beliefs, crude as they may now appear, had their origin in the nature and needs of man—that they were a legitimate product, as well as means and process, of his mental and moral development, is not to

be questioned. To future enlightened peoples, the record of them will still be valuable as perhaps the most complete and consecutive historical presentation of the progressive phases of religious development now remaining. The historical narrative of customs, facts and beliefs in the Bible, in this connection, as well as the figuratively-expressed legend of the genesis of Nature and of the early condition, habits and career of man, give us invaluable information as to primitive beliefs in these regards, and valuable hints as to the actual and probable order, causes and significance of the successive steps in religious evolution :—facts which we are still concerned to know. We cannot be otherwise than anxious to know *how*, and *why*, those ancient notions were formed and the nature and measure of their true human value—to know how men arrived at the belief that they had *fallen* from a state of primitive purity and of *bodily* immortality and happiness ;—how men, even now, obtain their notion that their primal ancestor was, not only innocent, deathless and happy, but was the semi-divine and perfect lord of the Earth and an ideally-perfect denizen of an ideally-perfect paradise. How did men arrive at the idea of their hopeless *indebtedness* to God ? How came they to conceive that God could be *paid and satisfied by blood*, and by *blood alone* ? In short, Why this Shylock attitude of an omnipotent and uncontrolled Creator to his suffering, pur-blind, perishable and wholly dependent creatures ? Certainly such relations can find no apology in the facts as viewed from the standpoint of an enlightened reason and morality. It is only in the light of evolution that such notions become either possible or

pardonable. An origin of extreme ignorance and progressive growth can alone make them comprehensible and tolerable. Irrational as they may appear, such notions are the natural outgrowth of the conditions and previous beliefs from which they sprung. The errors from which they arose were rather those of ignorance and misconception than of false reasoning. The men who formed them, constructed them from the then accredited state of facts and the traditional accounts and beliefs of their time, influenced by such notions of causation and natural phenomena as were then possible to them, and by such feelings, needs and aspirations as were natural to such men.

Remembering all this, Let us endeavor to recover and realize the intellectual status and the constructive mental materials of the men who successively moulded and modified these early religious beliefs,—now supposed to be sacred and inspired ; and to recall the course and causes of their actual reasonings and conclusions. Recurring to their own individual experiences and observations of human nature, they found it overflowing with animal desires and impulses, tending, almost resistlessly, to selfishness, violence, and all manner of excess and debauchery ; and that these errors led to depravity, personal degeneracy, disease, misery and death—found that, by nature, man was as prone to sin as “the sparks are to fly upwards.” They found life filled with disappointments, discontent and suffering, and ever-recurring want everywhere demanding renewed toil :—a life where every joy has its correlative sorrow, and which, at best, was but of “few days and full of trouble.” They did not

perceive the absolute necessity of labor, suffering and death to the divine purposes and to man's physical development and ultimate happiness. The question ever recurred to them—Why were these dread and inevitable penalties attached to the “fever called living?” They reflected too upon the distribution of happiness and contentment among men,—upon the indolent, careless content of the naked Savage and the ignorant innocence and joys of the child, and compared them with the anxious toils, sufferings and disappointments of the aged and the intelligent; only to find that, everywhere, contentment seemed to exist in the inverse ratio of knowledge, and to be driven to conclude that “where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise.” The young Savage, educated to civilization, longed to return to the condition and habits of his old Savage state. The children of the Civilized, when bred among savages, equally refused to accept civilized life. The Savage State, then, had the preference. Sin or conscious wrong, as well as misery and discontent, appeared everywhere to increase with the increase of knowledge. The condition of innocence and happiness was that of ignorance, indolent plenty, and thoughtless, careless freedom. What more natural and inevitable than that they should have concluded that sin, sorrow, toil and death were (speaking in their figurative style) the results of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge—of that knowledge which brings conviction of wrong-doing and the consciousness of guilt, and which opens up new objects of desire, and presents new reasons for discontent and for new labors, disappointments and sufferings, as well as for covetousness, temptation and sin? When they turned to human history and tra-

dition they found further confirmation of their views. They remembered their childhood as their own "golden age." By reason of their decaying powers of appreciation and enjoyment they could no longer see objects and life through the magnifying powers of infancy and the prismatic hues of hope :—the world seemed *degenerating*. What seemed to be thus affirmed by their own experience, they remembered to have heard as the burden of the complaints of their fathers and grandfathers also. Clearly the "good old times" were in the past, and the all-golden-time must have been in the very *beginning*. In further confirmation of this ideal reversal of the course of progress, came traditional lore and the mementoes and relics of earlier times, affirming that men grew more indolent, rude and ignorant as they were traced back into the past. Facts, fancy and tradition, therefore, pointed back to a primitive age of simple ignorance and of careless indolence, ease and content, and of that innocence which is born of ignorance—an innocence which "*knows* no wrong"—pointed back to an age when the primal man, as happy and untoiling and as unconscious of good and evil as the child, roamed at will among the forest-fruits and flowers as naked as his own ignorance and innocence. • This was their conception of man's primitive state, and a very shrewd one it was. It is not the paradisaical state of an ideally-perfect man which has been since modelled by our race-pride, but it is the true one, and the one actually described in the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis depicts the primal condition of man, not as being a "little below" that of angels, but as being barely above that of the brutes. It places man where the Scientific theory of evolution places him,—

assigning to him an undeveloped and ignorant nature and an animal condition. It makes him a wild-man—a naked savage, without a single art or implement, and without social, marital or family relations. Adam is introduced to us in the lowest state and condition that could be recognized as human. He is without a language, and utterly ignorant of good and evil. He is stark-naked, unwashed, soapless, unshorn, uncombed, unsheltered, rambling alone through the uncultivated forest of Eden among the other animals, and, like them, living without fire and feeding upon the wild fruits which Nature furnished.

• The first step in advance is represented as being that of entering into sexual relations—the male, and female man mate. Adam's wife, however, is still as naked and as shameless and unkempt as himself, and each follows the dictates and promptings of Nature, unconscious of nakedness, and incapable of immodesty or shame. The next step in progress alters this. Very naturally, the woman is made the first to become conscious of her nudity and of its impropriety, and is represented as setting to *work* to improve her condition by sewing her apron of leaves, and as persuading Adam into following her example. This sense of *impropriety* and *shame* was the first human knowledge or conception of right and wrong, and also the first incentive to invention and labor—the first fruits of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Thus were initiated man's ever-increasing wants and labors, both of body and brain, to meet the demands of his ever-heightening conceptions and ever-growing intelligence.

We soon find man dissatisfied with his fig-leaf clothing and his wild vegetable food ; find him clothed in skins ; indicating that he had passed from the wild stage to the hunter stage. We also find him represented as emerging from the wild forest of Eden, entering upon agricultural pursuits, and winning his bread by the sweat of his brow. We very properly find his developed pride and his sense of shame and disgust at his old, naked, animal life represented as standing, like a "flaming sword" between him and his old forest haunts, guarding against his return to the old, indolent, wild life.

Making proper allowance for the fact that the authors of Genesis, like all men of like development, believed that *all* their new thoughts, visions and dreams were inspired or communicated by Gods or Spirits, and that they habitually represented such supposed communications as commands or actual declarations by such spiritual beings, and that their modes of thought were confined to the Concrete, and were represented symbolically and figuratively,—making these allowances, we find the conception of the authors of Genesis, formed from the facts as they were then known and understood, to correspond substantially and in a striking manner with the conclusions of modern thought,—namely, that Man progressively emerged from a wild, ignorant and savage state, and that he was driven towards civilized life and into the wants, cares, labors and dissatisfaction which such progress required and involved, by a sense of the imperfection of his condition and an increasing knowledge of "good and evil." That their views should have been presented in an allegorical, tropical or concrete

form was to have been expected, not only from their known habits, but as a necessity of their stage of development. Such was the natural mode of thought and expression of the men of their race and time. What was supposed to have been suggested to, or put into, their minds by spiritual agencies, they represented as being *shown* or *said* to them by the supposed inspirers of their thoughts, dreams or visions. Thus we have God, the Creator, and the subtle Serpent talking freely with man ;—wisdom being here expressed by its usual and well-known symbol of the serpent ; while the knowledge of good and evil figuratively assumes the form of the "*fruit of the tree* of knowledge of good and evil."

But, Why did men subsequently come to construe this old expression of by-gone thought in a manner so adverse to its real meaning, and even to its letter, and in a manner which reflected so unfavorably upon the veracity and common sense of its authors? How came they to convert these very creditable speculations upon the primitive history of man and the origin of good and evil, labor and suffering, sin and death, into an ideal absurdity, unsupported by a single reason or fact? Several causes have conspired to produce this perversion. In the first place, as we have seen, there is a natural tendency to magnify and idealize the Past. To the causes already assigned for this may be added that of pride of race and ancestry. This feeling has largely

aided in coloring—nay, of controlling—our renderings of the Scriptural account of the genesis of the Race. Secondly : piety and reverence for the Creator have impelled men to assume the perfections of His creations, and successive generations have moulded the primitive account, as far as possible, to suit their *own growing ideal conceptions of perfection*, and not those of the authors of Genesis. Thirdly : time, reverence for the venerable, and the peculiar modes of thought and expression of the narrative itself, have rendered the book sacred, and engendered a belief in its inspiration,—a belief which its authors never entertained further than their belief in the inspiration of *all* men's new thoughts and dreams. This sacredness of the account or narrative has aided in securing it both a partially literal interpretation and an exemption from rational criticism. Fourthly : more advanced generations have neither comprehended the style, nor the symbols, of the authors, and have taken the Serpent and the tree of knowledge and its fruit as actual entities, and the supposed *talking* of God and the Serpent as actual, visible and audible intercourse. From these and other causes, men have grown into most singular beliefs in reference to the state of Adam and Eve—beliefs compounded of their own ideals and the literal renderings of Genesis, yet wholly unlike either.

The real difference between those ancient Thinkers and our present ones is not so much in the substantial conclusions they reached as to the primitive condition

of man, or even as to the cause and order of his progress, as it is in their notions as to what constitutes the highest and most desirable state of human existence, and as to the nature and character of God and his relations to man, and as to origin of suffering, evil and mortality. What those early Thinkers treat as a *fall*, modern ones would regard as a *progress*. What they regarded as evil, we regard as the highest earthly good. Their ideal state—that of absolute nakedness and ignorance—constitutes the very sum of our pity and disgust. We think that to fall to a lower state, was to reach that of the brute. They regarded moral knowledge and modesty as an enemy to human happiness and innocence, as things proscribed and forbidden by God, and as the one source of sin, evil and death; we regard them as our most desirable distinctions. They regarded labor, pain and death as due to man's moral conduct and as a curse. We, on the contrary, regard them as the necessary consequences of our original nature and the conditions of existence, and as the necessary means of human development. These direct and complete mental antagonisms have produced other singular, but not wholly incongruous results. In assigning to the good and evil powers their respective *rôles* in the drama of the "fall," they have given them the precise reverse ones to those which we should now assign them. God is represented as the enemy of man's progress and the foe of human knowledge—of that knowledge which not only we, but both God and the Serpent, regard as the most *godlike* quality. The Serpent advises man to acquire that godlike quality, or power, and assures him, *truly*, that he shall not die the day he eats of the forbidden fruit, but would know good

from evil like the Gods ; while God is represented as *falsely* declaring that *on the day* he should eat thereof he should *surely die*. The facts turn out as the Serpent had declared, and God, forgetting or disregarding his own position and declarations, is made to confirm the Serpent by saying, "Behold the man is become as *one of us*, to know good from evil," as well as by making him skin garments as an improvement on his fig leaves, and permitting him to continue to live near a thousand years thereafter and people the Earth, and by driving him forth into conditions and modes of life which would necessarily compel him to still higher knowledge. Such notions of God and knowledge were certainly very crude—at least very unlike those we should now form. God would hardly be represented now as the enemy of human knowledge and progress, nor as the friend of ignorance and savageism, nor as fearing that man would become godlike. Upon these very views, however, are based the conception of man's "fall" and degradation, with all its attendant doctrines—conceptions and doctrines which have profoundly influenced the development and destiny of Humanity. And, while it is easy to comprehend how such notions have arisen, it is still easier to demonstrate, that they are the precise reverse of the actual facts ;—that man's history exhibits a progress and not a "fall" (unless it were a fall *upwards*—since to fall lower was to cease to be human) ; and that knowledge and moral insight are desirable, not detestable, achievements. What they *call* a fall, is a progress and a blessing. And yet, without this fall and degradation of man, What is left of Christianity ? It underlies the entire system—its plan of redemption and everything.

The doctrine of man's *indebtedness to God* for penalties for broken laws, is now inextricably woven into the web of faith based upon the doctrine of his fall and degradation; although it would seem to be of later growth. Certainly, savages have no notion of such an indebtedness, nor of any relation between God and man from which it could arise. What we denominate their "worship" is not a proceeding for paying off debts or discharging obligations to their fetiches or Gods, but an act of bribery or conciliation—an effort to placate inimical spirits or win the favor of bad ones by agreeable offerings or presents. The addition of a sense of *obligation* to the Deities and of sacrificial offerings in payment or discharge of our indebtedness for broken obligations, only occurs after the establishment of civil governments and their exaction of tributes and penalties. It is in analogy to the relation between subject and ruler and to the uniform custom of rulers in converting crimes and offences against their laws and sovereignty into fines and pecuniary penalties, that the religious idea and custom arises. The needs and greed of princes have made them early adopt this mode of punishment and exaction, and the necessities and inclinations of priests have not rendered them slow to follow their example. So soon as pretended *divine laws* were resorted to, and a regular priesthood was established, these exactions of tributes and penalties from subject worshippers, for the support of the priests, of the temple and of the altar, became inevitable; and the idea of obligation and indebtedness would necessarily be superimposed upon the old idea of placatory and prohibitory free-offerings and bribes to the Gods.

This process has been greatly facilitated, if not initiated, by the apotheosis of great rulers and law-givers. When such rulers were deified by their ignorant subjects, to make the latter believe in a continuance of their obligations to their adored ruler and induce them to pay tribute or taxes and penalties to his earthly temple or altar was an easy matter. And subsequent rulers and priests were alike interested in permanently establishing these divine relations, laws and obligations for the purposes of restraint, power and profit. Thus grew up the conception of God being a heavenly or divine potentate or *King*, and of man's obligations to Him, and of his indebtedness to Him for penalties for broken laws—the idea of debtor and creditor, and of the necessity of payment to the “last farthing” to prevent a vindictive physical or personal punishment. To tell why sensible people still continue to base their religious beliefs and practices upon this earth-born and grossly anthropomorphic conception of God—one so childishy inappropriate and so derogatory to His nature and character—would be to repeat a story as old as man, and one which, to those who know man's nature and history, or who understand the methods of natural evolution, *needs* no repetition or explanation. A notion or custom, once established, has an indefinite lease of life. However absurd or however modified and re-appropriated, it may continue to float on through the Ages long after its origin and primary significance has been forgotten, and after it has ceased to find a place in the reason of its acceptors.

But now comes the further question—Why should God exact the payment of man's penalties and debts in *blood*? Why should this senseless, cruel, Shylock currency have been regarded as the only equivalent for what man is supposed to owe to Heaven's exchequer? Why are we told that,—“without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin?” Why should the good Father of Life desire, or be gratified with, the blood and vitals of His poor, suffering creatures? Why should the blood of *one, innocent* creature be received in satisfaction of the penalties due from *another, guilty* creature, or in any manner atone for its guilt or crimes? Why was the innocent and unstained sacrifice of Cain, wholly rejected while the reeking blood-offering from the innocent, slaughtered lamb of Abel was accepted? How could, or Why should, this life-blood of innocence have any possible tendency to gratify or *compensate* the Infinite God, or to punish Abel, or to atone for his sins? Why is it, that the sacrifice was, not only of the blood of one innocent creature for the offences or debts of another, but that the sacrificed creature *must be* both innocent and perfect—without “spot or blemish?” This divine craving for blood and the sacrifice of the innocent for the deeds and debts of the guilty, is ever the most revolting and incomprehensible of mysteries. The idea of even a human Despot demanding blood for the *sake* of blood—as a compensation, in itself, for his claims against the guilty—and not as a punishment inflicted on the guilty, but expressly required to be drawn from the pure and innocent, would be too monstrous for belief. Such an idea could never have originated with our present conceptions of Deity. With our views, a being who would demand

that his altars should be kept streaming, from age to age, with the hot life-blood of innocent and agonized men, women, children and dumb brutes to pay the debts of their *guilty slayers*, would not be a conceivable being, much less a God.

Such notions, however, have had a legitimate origin and normal growth, however repugnant they may now appear to the more enlightened and developed intelligence of our times. And when we trace that origin and growth, and view them as a continuous development or metamorphosis of old beliefs, our astonishment at their existence ceases. We shall find the origin and the first step in the explanation of these notions in the early fetichistic ages. There we have already seen man endeavoring to conciliate or propitiate the dreaded invisible spirits by presents or offerings of vegetable food—food consisting of the supposed *hidden life* in the grain, fruits and esculents thus offered them. We find in Genesis an allegorical account of the fact of the transition from these vegetable sacrifices or offerings to the offerings of blood. We find the *elder* brother, Cain, still offering, like a true fetichist, the products of the soil; only, however, to be rejected; while the *younger* brother, Abel, having adopted the incoming notion, offers the acceptable sacrifice. As usual, we find the new innovation opposed, and the first reformer slain. Men of the old fetichistic phase of development had grown into certain new beliefs and discarded their old ones by the time they had reached the stage represented by Abel. They had formed more exalted notions of divine and Spiritual beings—had come to regard them as having superior and immortal natures, and

had discarded the old childish notion that *all* things possessed a hidden conscious life or spirit, and had come to confine the possession of a spirit to the animal kingdom. That they still believed that all animals possessed them is shown in the book of Ecclesiasticus by the query —“ Who knoweth the soul of man that it goeth up or the *soul of the beast* that it goeth down ? ”

But, while the Abelites had risen to a conception of Gods of an immortal nature, their conception did not rise to the height of freeing their Gods from the desire of eating and drinking or from requiring the old humoring and propitiation. They still required presents and supplications to them. But How could they offer to a spirit visible food which they no longer believed to contain the invisible food of Gods or Spirits? They knew they did not eat the visible parts of their offerings, for no part of that ever disappeared ; and the invisible vital or spiritual part they no longer regarded vegetables as possessing. To offer vegetables to a God, therefore, became a mockery. The abandonment of the old fetichistic notion of the existence of a hidden spirit in all things and confining such existences to animals, necessarily confined divine offerings, *as food*, to the animal kingdom, although the senses of their Gods might still be regaled by the real but invisible odors from sweet-savored herbs or spices, and by the smoke of burning sacrifices and the sight of flowers. But these changes were not all that had occurred. Men had come to believe that the life, *anima* or soul of the animal resides in the blood, or at most in the blood and vitals. This transition and belief has been general at a certain stage of development,

as clearly appears both from history and scripture. In the ninth chapter of Genesis we are told, that God expressly forbids man to eat blood, because it is the *life* of the animal (which was exclusively appropriated by God). This belief, coupled with the foregoing beliefs, rendered animal and human sacrifices inevitable. And, accordingly, we find they everywhere prevailed at the appropriate stage of beliefs:—the Greek, the Roman, the Aztec and the Jew, alike, making their altars crimson with blood and odorous with spices and burning vitals, in order to feast and regale their Gods; never doubting that these were palatable viands to their Gods and a “sweet savor” in their nostrils. Speaking of these divine offerings, Sir John Lubbock says: “They are, indeed, a stage through which, in any natural process of development, religion must pass. At first it is supposed that the spirits actually eat the food offered them. Soon, however, it would be observed that animals sacrificed did not disappear; and the natural explanation would be that the spirit ate the *spiritual part* of the victim, leaving the grosser portion for his devout worshipper.”

All this at once lays bare the secret of blood-offerings, and explains the apparently inexplicable mystery of the myth of Cain and Abel. And as the Abelites in abandoning the old fetichistic *mode* of feeding their Gods, still retained the fetichistic idea of *feeding* them, so subsequent worshippers, who had abandoned the idea of feeding them altogether, did not abandon or cease to pursue the old forms and methods of *propitiating* God by sacrifices and blood-offerings, but conformed their new notion of their *indebtedness* to God for broken laws, to

the old method of feeding and propitiating him, and thus literally paid off God's claims in innocent blood. We can understand the crude, but obsolete notions of the Fetichists or Cainites and of the still less fetichistic Abelites, from their respective standpoints, and can understand why the Abelites should have offered as food to their God the most perfect and innocent of their animals. It was perfectly natural and appropriate, with their views and purposes. It was proper to regale his God on the most perfect and pure food and of a kind which was suitable to His nature. It is only after the old custom and rite is continued for a wholly different purpose, and with wholly different views, that the incongruity, cruelty and irrationality of the conception and procedure becomes manifest. The simple fact is, that they have retained, under the pressure of a supposed divine command, these ancient rites and customs and adapted them to their own subsequent notions, long after they had ceased to comprehend the real reasons for their original adoption. Such gross incongruities and absurdities must always occur where progressive peoples are compelled to endeavor to conform their new and growing ideas and aspirations to ancient sacred laws and rites founded upon already abandoned and forgotten notions.

SAVIOUR—IDEA.

When men have come to regard themselves as the subjects of a Divine Ruler or King to whom they are indebted for the penalties due for inherited guilt and for broken laws and obligations, and to regard themselves as degenerate and hopelessly insolvent and degenerating, and as under the ban of divine wrath for their shortcomings and misdoings, they naturally turn, in their impotence, to the idea of a Saviour. The growing necessities of their development, and their germinating ideals compel them to adopt and recognize divine laws and obligations whose rigorous penalties and exactions will coerce their low and ungovernable natures into subjection and restraint:—the rigor of the restraints and penalties being determined by the requirements of their own brutality and obstinacy. They find that, in practice, these rigorous obligations cannot be met, and that their delinquencies are ever accumulating on them. The contemplation of their supposed degeneracy and impotent retrogression and the sickening contrast between what they might be and ought to be and what they are—between ideal life and real life compels them to chafe and brood over their hopeless frailty, depravity and impotence, and the burden of their supposed debts for transgressions becomes intolerable. Their most sanguine and earnest efforts to redeem themselves or others are rewarded with the most disheartening results. They seem scarcely to retard man's growing degeneracy, much less elevate him to their ideal standard. Redden their altars as they might with offerings of blood, their moral bankruptcy appeared to become ever more hopelessly irretrievable.

Do what they might, the Race seemed to be hopelessly fallen and lost, while their own lives were hurrying on, like fleeting phantoms, towards death and night! An endless longing for the Better and Higher was accompanied by a despairing sense of impotence. They yearned for an ideal immortality, and were met by the hateful, rotting grave, and by a voiceless and rayless Beyond. The aid of their priestly agents and earthly intercessors was as impotent to save or redeem them as their own efforts, prayers and sacrifices. Like the sick and enfeebled Cæsar, succumbing to the waves of the Tiber, they were ready to cry—"Help, Cassius, or I sink,"—"Save, or I perish!"

The manifestations of Nature furnished the suggestions and analogies which gave direction and shape to those human hopes and beliefs which were so necessary to relieve man from the intolerable burden of his sense of obligation and indebtedness and of personal imperfection and impotence—so necessary to prevent indifference and despair and reinspire hope and effort. The life-giving and life-restoring powers of Nature were observed to be primarily dependent upon the light and heat emanating from the Sun. These appeared to descend upon the earth and impregnate it, and to annually *regenerate* it and clothe it with new life. At the Sun's annual departure the Earth put on sack cloth and ashes, or draped herself in mourning: at its return she again decked herself as a bride, and beneath the bright smiles

and warm embraces of her returning Lord she again teemed with joyous life. It is to the various sun-myths of the different races, based upon the phenomena of light, heat and the returning seasons and earthly restorations, that we must look for the suggestion and explanation of this Saviour-idea. The mental differences between the authors of the various myths and their influence upon each other, coupled with other causes, produced corresponding differences and combinations in the conceptions and mythic representations of the various ages and races ; but everywhere, from Old Mexico to older India, men have founded their ideas and hopes of a divine Saviour, or an Intermediary between Earth and Heaven, upon the analogies furnished by the Sun and its revivifying and restorative agencies and influences. Whether the myths personifying these powers and agencies and embodying the hopes and beliefs they inspired, would be complete or fragmentary—whether they would refer generally to the Sun and its emanations and influences or would specifically distinguish them or confound and confuse them, would depend upon many considerations ; but they all had their source in the same human needs and aspirations and took their general features from the same natural objects and analogies, whether the chief hero and hope was called Apollo or Bacchus, Balder or Hercules, Quetzalcoatl or Krishna. The burden of the story is always the triumph of the life-giving and regenerating over the life-destroying and degrading, influences of Nature, through means of the Sun or Supreme Lord of Heaven or some divine Son, Logos, or emanations from him. As the decaying life of the vegetable world was renewed by the presence of the vernal sun and the

on-falling of its emanations of light and heat, so many, or most, men hoped and reasoned that the Divine Spirit of God would engender, in some of Earth's daughters, a son and saviour who should be the light and life of Humanity,—and should overcome death and the grave as the Sun did its wintry death, and become the Redeemer of the Race and its Intercessor with God.

These divine benefactors or Saviours are represented as having brought, or as expected to bring, light, healing, and blessings to man, here or hereafter. They are represented as the medium of man's creation and preservation, as toiling or suffering for him, as bearing his burdens and sorrows, as overcoming death and the destructive forces of Nature, and sometimes as being the seed or source of life and the offspring of an earthly virgin under the fructifying influence of the divine effulgence; thus personifying and representing the return of the life-giving Sun from its winter solstice and its re-entry into the zodiacal sign of the Virgin, and its engendering new life in the virgin earth, and its passing through its preappointed course and labors of vitalizing and regenerating the vegetable world, and its final passage into the death of winter, only to return again with new power and glory.

From such developing ideals and aspirations, such sense of obligation and indebtedness to God, and such convictions of the degeneracy and impotence of man, have men derived their belief in the need of a divine Intermediator and Redeemer; and from such analogies in natural phenomena have they won the conception and hope of such a divine salvation. Such beliefs are the natural outgrowths of a dawning, original civilization. No Savage can conceive them. No Rationalist needs them. The Evolutionist already perceives that the phenomena originating this idea of man's fall and degeneracy and of the necessity of a Saviour, are, themselves, but a part of the very means and processes by which man is already being self-developed, elevated and saved without supernatural intervention or other causes than the inherent and developing powers and proclivities of his own nature acting under the pressure and inducements furnished by the conditions of his existence; that, instead of man's needing to be saved from the knowledge of evil and from labor, dissatisfaction, suffering and death, these supposed curses are his blessings, and constitute the necessary means and method of saving, purifying and elevating him here and hereafter; that, instead of man being a bankrupt debtor to his Creator, the Divine All-Father is forever exercising His beneficence and discharging His own obligation to His helpless children by providing for their progressive physical and psychical development and their continued growth in intelligence and virtue, including that ever higher knowledge of good and evil which will still further assimilate them to divine beings, both here and hereafter. They perceive that man's mortal career is not one of ordeal and expia-

tion, but one of coercive and persuasive growth and development,—physical and psychical. The ideas of man's fall, degeneracy, and legal and moral insolvency and of the existence and necessity of a divine mediator and of vicarious expiation and atonement have been appropriate, and doubtlessly necessary, means of human development, but they have been provisional, and not final and ultimate, conclusions. They are man's self-evolved motives and stimulants to endeavor, hope and progress, and when they have filled the measure of their usefulness they will give place to higher and truer conceptions.

REVELATIONS.

Our inherited faith in divine revelations and in the sanctity and infallibility of ancient religious writings is another relic of an undeveloped and superstitious Past, which needs explanation to our generation. Why did the Jew, in common with the Parsee, Brahmin, and other ancient peoples, bestow such sanctity and unreasoning faith upon their primitive writings? Why were the simple precepts and crude conceptions and narratives of ancient writings treated as of divine origin and of infallible authority, to the exclusion of later and more rational writings? We answer, first, that it was by reason of

that universal habit, already noticed, of reversing the order of human wisdom, knowledge and excellence, and of projecting the age, venerableness and perfection of the world back into its ignorant and undeveloped infancy : and secondly, by reason of the impression of the friendly intimacy of the early fathers with spirits and divine beings, derived from their own naïve recitals and accounts of their familiar intercourse with such divine or superhuman beings. As we have said, men, who are only capable of concrete thought and expression, habitually and necessarily speak and write in this manner without their at all attributing special validity or verity to their own utterances, or meaning to convey the idea of special and exceptional intercourse with Divine or spiritual beings in the sense attributed to them by their descendents. They habitually presented their concrete ideas in concrete, sensuous forms—in parables, fables, legends, myths, allegories and other figurative and narrative forms. When dreams, ideas and visions were presented to their minds, they were treated as actual communications from the spiritual beings from whom they were supposed to emanate, whether God, spirit or démon ; and were detailed as the sayings or conversations of such beings. They naïvely tell us of their Gods talking and arguing with them, and of the honor they did them by becoming the fathers of demi-Gods by their wives and daughters, and of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men and raising up “giants of men in those days ;”—probably referring to the questionable honor done them by some chief or king whom they afterwards deified, and to the marriage of descendents of royal or superior races with their inferiors.

Naturally disposed to venerate and exalt, and even to deify, their ancestors and their ancient and renowned rulers and Priests who wrote these "sacred books," men not only ignorantly misconceive the true meaning of these early recitals, but strongly incline to construe them favorably to the marvellous character and capacities of these venerable and idealized progenitors. The sacred, the supernatural and the miraculous always loom up in proportion to *distance and time*, and in the *inverse ratio of rationality and intelligence*. Millions of Christians, to-day, bow at the shrines of early saints, the stories of whose lives and miracles, if told as occurring now, would be laughed at in our nurseries ; while it is rationally certain that, if Jesus or St. Peter were now to enter one of our fashionable churches with their accustomed dress and manner, they would be invited to back seats or the gallery ; and were they to stroll through the country preaching in the fields and streets against the doctrines and the preachers and deacons of the churches as they once did against those of popular Judaism, they might deem themselves fortunate if they were not arrested for vagrancy, nuisance or disturbing the peace. The fathers of the later Jews had stoned the very prophets which their descendants honored, while they themselves stoned or maltreated those who would be venerated by subsequent generations ; and certainly Christians would now be even less tolerant than were the Jews of new and miraculous pretensions of ignorant or unlearned men,—or of any miraculous pretensions whatever.

Alleged inspirations, since those attributed to the early patriarchs, have several different sources. There have been the *designed* deceptions of Priests and rulers, the better to deceive or intimidate their enemies, or to inspire or control their own people, as well as of the well-meaning reformer, to secure the ear of the superstitious masses ; and also of charlatans and impostors to dupe their victims. But there is, still further, the honest, but misconstrued, visions and rhapsodies of the poet, and, underlying all these, there are those arising from ignorance and false conceptions—from *unintentional* self-imposition and delusion, which constitute the chief source and support of the idea of inspiration. These latter, alone, need seriously to engage our attention, as they constitute the basis of the whole.

The men who lived thousands of years before Esqurol was born, and from whom we derived our notions of deity, spirituality and spiritual communications and relations, had no idea of natural diseases and derangements of the brain and their control over the action of the mind. Nor, indeed, had they any conception of natural diseases or of natural causation of any kind, in our sense of those terms. It is late before man reaches such conceptions, still later before he recognizes the law-governed character of all physical causation, and still later when he applies the law of causation to mental phenomena. Prior to these conceptions, men attribute all causation to voluntary personal agencies. If they were sick, they were being punished by God, injured by some demon, or bewitched by an enemy. To such men the men, angels, monstrous forms, demons and supposed Gods who visited

and conversed with them in dreams and visions, as well as their own imaginary flights and ramblings through space, paradise or pandemonium, were, all, most portentous realities and the subjects of most anxious interpretations. Upon them often depended the rise and fall of kingdoms, dynasties and religions, as well as the fate of individuals and battles. The defence of Jesus by Pilate was greatly stimulated by his wife's dreams.

While men thus believed in direct, personal causation by Gods, spirits, witches and demons, as well as in the reality and profound significance of dreams, visions and hallucinations, they also spoke and wrote of them in the same sense, and as if such mental manifestations were *actual sensuous facts and occurrences*. They had no idea of purely cerebral sensations. The celebrated traveller, Sir Samuel Baker, tells us, in speaking of the mental modes and habits of the present Arabic descendants of Abraham, that, "Should the present history of the country be written by an Arab scribe, the style of the description would be purely that of the Old Testament, and the various calamities or good fortunes that have in the course of nature befallen both the tribes and individuals, would be recounted either as special visitations of Divine wrath, or blessings for good deeds performed. If in a dream a particular course of action is suggested, the Arab believes that God has *spoken* and directed him. The Arab scribe would describe the event as the "*voice of the Lord*" having spoken unto the person, or that "God *appeared* to him in a dream and *said*, etc." Precisely such language as this is used in the Jewish Scriptures, and was written with precisely the same concep-

tions and modes of thought and expression; and yet, men who have long outgrown such mental modes, now, under pressure of their superstitious reverence for "The Book," accept such recitals as the inspired record of *literal facts*.

But more potent, because more incomprehensible and mysterious, than dreams, was the abnormal or disordered waking-activities of the brain. The mental phenomena of insanity which are now known to be the results of physical disease have, everywhere among ignorant peoples, been treated as possessing a mysterious and awe-inspiring significance and sacredness; and an immature and uninformed Reason has given to the distorted and monstrous visions and the incongruous ravings of Mania a credence which has been refused to the profoundest Philosophy. Man not only believes, but *desires* to believe, in such mysterious utterances. He is feverish to get a glimpse of the "Spirit-world" and of the Hereafter, and with a perfect passion he loves mystery for the sake of its mystery. His reason is too immature and his knowledge too imperfect to lift the veil from the face of Nature or to grasp her designs from her manifestations and processes, but his desires and imaginations, leaping all barriers, act as temporary substitutes for knowledge; and all doors fly wide before the "open sesame" of dreams and visions, and Somnia and Mania walk hand-in-hand through the Infinite,—alike defying the limitations of Time, Space and Reason. This is what man

longs to do in reality, and for the knowledge and facts he would thus acquire, he greedily accepts any and every attainable substitute,—however wildly extravagant or absurdly impossible. Reason having failed to satisfy his longings, he not only ignores, but overrides it. Men who believe in special inspirations find the professed or supposed explorers and revealers of the “Unknown,” to be *exceptional* men, who, in exceptional states and in an exceptional manner, give descriptions and utterances which are equally exceptional, and which are often wildly incoherent, absurdly incongruous, or Deiphically obscure. They gradually observe, that invisible beings do not seek, as their medium of communication, natural, common-sense, practical people, but habitually avoid them in favor of the opposite and exceptional classes; and that natural, common-sense people never think, speak or act like these mysterious mediums and prophets. They learn that it is only when the man is “not himself” or “not at himself” that these mysterious dramas are performed in his brain,—only when he is maundering in a trance, convulsed with excitement, or pouring forth the wild visions engendered by the rigors of asceticism,—only when his friends can no longer recognize in his words and acts his old or accustomed Self,—only when some new and strange spirit seemed to possess him and to have usurped control over his mental action and identity,—in short, only when he seems to be either “possessed of a devil” or filled or occupied by some holier ghost or Spirit. Believing, as they do, in the universal and exclusively voluntary causation, such men naturally conclude that, when an entirely or manifestly different spirit is exhibited by a person, there must be another spirit

actually possessing his body and acting in place of his own. They never thought of looking for the cause of his strange and altered mental action in his own bodily disorders and changes. It was, of course, some *other* good or evil spirit which had "entered into" and "possessed him," and acted through his organs.

Here, then, in this belief in the supernatural origin of the dreams' and the feverish visions and hallucinations of the morbid mind, we perceive clearly the cause and origin of the whole doctrine and belief of "devil possession" and "special revelations." The thoughts of the "possessed" or "inspired" person were expressed through his body, but they emanated from, and were controlled by, Gods or Spirits from the "other world;" and, of course, spirits from the "other world," knew all about that other world and the future. When they spoke through a human medium, the only question to be determined by the hearer was, whether the author of the thought and language was a good or an evil spirit—whether they came from a heavenly and truthful spirit or from a demoniac and deceptive one. Upon the decision of this question would depend the conclusion as to whether the man was "devil possessed" or "divinely inspired"—a truthful prophet and revelator or an unreliable one. These morbid mental manifestations had become, no longer the results of ideas put into men's minds by God, and which were common to all men,—but were the direct action of the divine or diabolical spirits who had taken control of their bodies and organs. The more incomprehensible, unnatural and unmanlike they were, the more certain they were to have come

from superhuman sources. The more mysterious they were, the more ominous they became, and the more appropriate to the invisible and mysterious beings of the unknown realms of mystery. Mystery and occult meaning were then regarded as evidences of divinely aided wisdom, and their highest intellectual achievements were expressed in riddles, even where the mental manifestations were normal. To get their ideas couched in symbols so obscure as to puzzle the minds of the most acute interpreters, was an achievement only excelled by the utterly uninterpretable utterances and visions of the insane,—(that is, of the Spirits “possessing” them). Even those prophets by profession, who were not insane, generally affected the mysterious and bizarre forms and visions of the “possessed.” It would not do for prophets to talk like ordinary mortals. That their mystic utterances could never be interpreted, or that none could ever know whether they were rightly interpreted or not, instead of consigning them to the limbo of Nonsense, added the highest guaranty of their superhuman origin and value. Their utility was even heightened by the fact of their inexplicability; since every man could interpret them to suit himself, and they thus become exhaustless sources of hope and comfort to successive generations, however widely differing in their several interpretations. Not only was this mystic obscurity acknowledged and admired, but it was claimed, even by the Apostles, that they were not of “private interpretation,” but required an *inspired interpreter* whose powers were a gift of the Holy Ghost. So that, those for whom these divine communications were intended could, not only not know what they meant, but could neither know

whether their utterers were inspired prophets or designing impostors, nor determine whether their professedly, inspired interpreters were really inspired and truly interpreted them or not. Thus even Ignorance is self-helpful, and draws the most wonderful comfort from conclusions still more wonderful. But what a boundless and open field for imposture, fraud and charlatanism !

All the great religions have had their supernatural origin, their divine books, and their inspired teachers, authors and prophets, and each has claimed that those of all the others are mere impositions, and that it, alone, was the sole depository of the divine word and sole medium of the divine favor. About the claims of each other, they reason right well, considering ; but about their own pretensions their reason is silent. Each appeals to a long record of undoubted miracles to establish its pretensions, and yet denounces an equal list of similar miracles, similarly proved, that are vouched by each of the others. Thus each is proved to be an imposture by all the others, and each overthrows its own pretensions by its assaults upon the similar, and similarly-proved, pretensions of all the rest ! If the assertion of ancient records and traditions are infallible, then each has a firm basis ; if not, then neither has.

The inestimable virtue and most striking peculiarity of all sacred and inspired books consists in the wholly exceptional fact, that they *prove themselves*,—and are thus

self-sustaining and labor-saving. By a process outside the domain of Reason they prove their sacred infallibility by their inspiration, and when asked for proof of their inspiration, they offer their own sacred and infallible assertion. The circle is as short as it is complete and convenient.

The peculiar theological value of most prophecy consists in its being incapable of refutation from its very incomprehensibility, as well as in its capability of confirming or refuting any theory by its indefiniteness, obscurity and flexibility. It is an india-rubber cloak that will fit any form from that of a Hottentot to a Highlander, with either end up or either side out. Christians in the first century were tremblingly awaiting the prophesied end of the world: they are waiting still—charming perspicuity!

The total absurdity of specifically foretelling the future, of reversing the law of causation and the natural modes of Being, or of giving absolute sanctity and infallibility to anything ever written by human hands or in human language, would seem sufficiently palpable to drive all such conceptions from the rank of intelligent beliefs. The future never exists. Being exists in the ever-evolving, transforming, and becoming Present. What particular forms it may assume or evolve, and what special modes or forms of motion it may inaugurate or change, in the endless succession of momentarily-becoming presents, must depend, at every change, upon the existing facts and efficiencies. To predict a non-existent fact, therefore, it is necessary to know all the present and

intervening causes, conditions, modes, laws and processes to be involved in its production. In the absence of the actual facts and realities to be known and of the necessary knowledge to rationally deduce them, man could, by no possibility, *know* them. The highest evidence which he could ever claim to have, would be some effect or effects produced in his own mind, which purported to be, or which he supposed to be, representative or indicative of the coming fact. There would be no *existing* fact or reality to which his mind could representatively respond. The entire facts concerned would consist of his *own* internally-originated and exclusively subjective mental impressions and manifestations. At most, the whole matter would consist of the man's own visions or dreams—the actions of his own mind. But what is the *value* of his own dreams and mental visions, even to himself,—much more to others? And, Who is to determine that value? and, How are they to determine it? These are the questions. Men may dream dreams, eat themselves into nightmares, starve themselves into visions, or have morbid illusions; but what of it? After all, they are, and can be, nothing *but* one man's dreams, visions, illusions and nightmares. But why should any such mental manifestations of any one man be regarded as anything *more* than what they *are*? Why give any dream or vision a significance beyond the fact that it *is* a dream or vision, or give one man's dream or vision a greater significance, sacredness or credence than another's?

When men believed that their inclinations and every new or strange idea they had were communicated to

their minds by some God or spirit, and were controlled and changed by such unseen agencies at their pleasure, or when they believed that such invisible spirits entered into persons and there usurped and performed the offices of their own spirits or minds, we can understand how such men could believe in either the spiritual or divine origin or inspiration of men's ideas and visions. We can understand, also, that after a people have ceased to believe in the divine or spiritual origin of the generality of man's ideas and inclinations, they might continue to believe in such an origin under peculiar conditions or in special cases. We can see how men believing in such spiritual influences, and knowing nothing of natural insanity, would very naturally conclude that such influences were in actual operation where the mental action was especially singular and strange, or where it was clearly unlike the original and known mental modes and actions of the persons affected, and would imagine them "possessed" by a foreign spirit. What else *could* they believe?

But How men who know the *natural physical causes* of these exceptional mental manifestations, and who know that the men who promulgated the doctrines of prophecy and inspiration had no such knowledge, can still maintain the sacredness and infallibility of their writings and declarations, is not so rationally comprehensible. The very same phenomena which were treated as witchcraft, or as spiritual or devil "possession" or "inspiration" or as inspired dreams, visions or prophecies, would not *now* be considered as such, were they to occur in our day. Why then do we solemnly recognize them as such, simply because they were so treated

by early and ignorant men who knew no better—who were ignorant of the facts and laws which make us view the same facts and occurrences as natural and law-governed phenomena? With their childish knowledge and beliefs, their conclusions were natural and legitimate. With ours, they are childish and impossible. With a primitive world of Scientists such a thing as witchcraft, inspiration, prophecy or “devil possession” would never have been heard of.

If we did not know, indeed, the almost resistless potency and vitality of hereditary beliefs, and the superstitious, reverence and fears they impose upon the human mind, we should be at a loss to conceive, independent of scientific refutation, how men entertaining the conceptions of God and his attributes, as we now do, could give a moment's credit to the idea of a *special* divine revelation of any kind. If it were not impossible, from the very nature of our intelligence and mental action, that they could be produced in any but the natural methods, it would only be because even contradictions and impossibilities are possible to God and consistent with His nature and methods. If, therefore, God could actually will the action of man's mind, and *put* ideas into His head by a mere act of volition of his own mind, it could only be because nothing whatever is impossible to Him; and, in that case, He could as easily will one man to know the truth as another, or to will *all* men to know it as to will *one* to know it. What conceivable reason, then, can be assigned for His not doing so—for His communicating to a few, what was intended and necessary for all? Why did he communicate His will to one man

in one country and of one language and one race, when the matter involved the eternal happiness or misery of all men everywhere ; and thereby make the salvation or damnation of the whole Human Race depend, not only upon the dreams and visions of one man or a few men, but upon the "say so" of such selected individuals as to both the fact and nature of their dreams, or upon the varied and conflicting interpretations of them by other people ? Why not, in like manner, reveal to each man what He desired him to know ? For another man to *tell* us that God had revealed His purposes to *him*, is no revelation to *us*. At most it is but his assertion and interpretation of his own mental manifestations. Why communicate his will, even to the few, in dreams and visions, when the experience and reason of mankind would ultimately be compelled to discard all dreams and visions as not only insecure, but worthless evidence for any purpose, save as to the state of the dreamer's own health, or bodily or mental condition ? Why should God, not only select methods of communication which are of all others the most obscure and worthless, but also shape these into symbols or riddles which utterly defy all assured interpretation ? Why give us evidence which Reason rejects as worthless, and give even that worthless evidence in a form which required another inspired man to interpret it, and thus compel us to trust both the mere "say so" of the interpreter and the "say so" of the dreamer about evidence which an informed reason necessarily rejects as worthless even when directly communicated ? Why, again, give evidence so liable to misconstruction, to misconceptions, to misinterpretations, falsehoods, frauds and impostures, and which is worthless in its very

nature, to unknown men, in unknown lands, in the misty ages of ignorance and superstition, for the purpose of convincing and informing men living in remote countries and in the remote future, instead of giving it direct to the men themselves? Why cause mysterious dreams and visions to float through the brain of a Jew on the banks of the Jordan for the purpose of informing men living on the Ohio or Amazon amidst the wilds of a continent which was to remain undiscovered for three thousand years, instead of making the Indian dream for himself? Nay, worse still, Why did He also cause the Indian to dream like dreams and see like visions and make like prophecies, which he also believed as the Jew believed his, and for the same reasons, and then damn the Indian for not believing the dreams and stories of the unknown Jew, (after they had come down to him through so many dark ages of superstition and so many different languages and conflicting translations and interpretations,) instead of believing his own? Why did God give to man no power save his own *reason*, to test and determine truth and thus protect himself from error, fraud and imposition, and then make his eternal happiness or eternal punishment depend upon evidences—the truth of which he not only had no power of rationally testing and determining, but which his reason must inevitably reject with a certainty and vigor exactly proportioned to his growth, freedom and enlightenment?

Or, again, if dreams and visions ever come from God, Why not all dreams and visions come from Him? If they do not all come from Him, How are we to determine, even among our own dreams which are from God

and which are not? Or, if one man's dreams and visions are better than another's, How are we to determine which is the true and which the false? Shall we determine by the character of the dream, or that of the dreamer? And who, in either case, is to guaranty the infallibility of our own judgments? If we are to judge by the character of the dream, we have no criterion to judge by, and shall find them determined and characterized by the dreamer's own health, state and condition. If we attempt to judge by the character of the dreamer or Seer himself, we find ourselves without either the requisite proof or the requisite capacity to do it, and without the slightest means of knowing the requisite qualifications for a safe dreamer; unless, indeed, we accept the old notion that a man is divinely inspired when he is especially incomprehensible and unhuman, and is insanely wild and obscure. If we are to credit the belief or assertion of the prophet or dreamer himself, we are at the mercy of every self-deluded enthusiast, lunatic or impostor who approaches us, and must accept the absurd and conflicting utterances and pretensions of the whole. For impostors and lunatics alike *claim* inspiration. If we attempt to determine any of these matters by reason, we appeal to an arbiter which inflexibly rejects the whole. Men, led in blind and trembling subjection to their hereditary notions, dare not ask themselves whether a beneficent and just God, who had the power to make every man know the truth for himself, would make all men, of all time, depend for their salvation or damnation upon their belief in, and obedience to, information based upon evidence of such a character, alleged to have been given to unknown men of unknown times, in remote

lands, and transmitted in an alleged record abounding in manifest ignorance, errors, alterations, forgeries, self-contradictions, pretended miracles, witchcrafts and other discarded superstitions—a record which *itself* declares its essential doctrine a “stumbling block” to the very people to whom the divine communication was sent, and to be “foolishness” to the wisest of the then living peoples, and to have been *designedly* hidden from the “wise and prudent” by God Himself, and to have been “revealed unto *babes*,” and promulgated by ignorant men by the “foolishness of preaching;” and which its believers, in all ages, have admitted to be based upon mysteries which are not only incomprehensible and in absolute conflict with human reason, but which utterly defy human conception—a record which has engendered about a thousand distinct and conflicting sects, and an incalculable number of conflicting individual interpretations; whose existing copies of the New Testament, alone, are acknowledged to present some 25000 differences, about 2000 of which are acknowledged of moment—a record which both itself and its believers admit that *no man can* have the faith it requires unless it be GIVEN to him by an act of God, and that its prophecies require an inspired interpreter—a record which has not, after the lapse of nineteen centuries, reached one-half of the human race, which has not been efficiently embraced by one-twentieth of them, and which has never been understood by one! Dare we really *think*, and yet believe that this is the method which the Divine Father and good God would take to communicate His will to His ignorant children, and then damn them if they did not or could not believe them, or for not knowing them at all

—for being among the nations that forgot God? If God had racked His infinite wisdom through eons of ages in examining the methods and ways calculated to convince and assure human reason, could He have found a better way “how *not* to do it?” Is it not a blasphemy to charge it upon God? Are we to make the absurd excuse, that “God’s ways are not like man’s ways?” If God’s ways differ from man’s, they can only differ in their *superior* rationality and perfection, not in their inefficiency, irrationality, incongruity, inconsistency and absurdity. What God really purposed has been actually accomplished, and, for those ends, the means have been efficient, rational and perfect. To produce the *desired results in man*, such as he has been, the exactly right and necessary means and methods have been used. Those means and their results, thus far, are open to investigation; but the ultimate end and purpose they involve must be won from reason and the whole course of the facts themselves, and not from the temporary and specific desires and dreams of undeveloped and ignorant men. The whole facts indicate, that the divine end and purpose was the physical and psychical development of man by the inherent powers and proclivities of his own nature, acting under the influence of the conditions of his existence;—in short, by natural self-evolution. This has been accomplished, and by means rationally and actually calculated to produce the purposed end. The fact is, that the purpose, whatever it was, had reference to man and to his mind and action, and the ways and means had to be such, not as would apply to God or some other being “whose ways are past finding out,” but such as would produce the desired effects upon ig-

norant and feeble *man*, by his *own ways*. Men have erred in assuming God's purposes, or gathering them from their own, or other's, dreams and desires, and then attempting to reconcile them with their own false or imperfect notions of the facts, instead of first ascertaining the facts as produced by God's actual means and methods, and then determining His purposes by the progressive course, order and results of His operations. The truth is, that if God's purposes were those assigned to Him by our popular religion, His means and methods have not only been irrational failures, but were necessarily doomed to be such by the facts of Nature. No *reliable* information *can* be communicated, to all peoples of all generations, in human *language*, whether written or spoken. The diversity of human languages, their vagueness and uncertainty and their incompetency from incompleteness, as well as their constant changes from generation to generation, and the impossibility of perfect translations from one language into another, would render the propagation and continuance of clear and definite communications impossible, even if they were such to the minds of the inspired medium. This objection, alone, is fatal to such methods.

A very fair illustration of the *perspicuity and practical value* of inspiration and prophecy may be seen by the absurd general results of the whole scriptural prophecies concerning the end of the World,—already alluded to, and concerning the Christ, as exhibited by the beliefs

and histories of the Jews and Christians. The Jew has waited, through thousands of years of suffering and slavery, for the coming of their prophesied Messiah, and still wait on. The Christian, basing his creed upon the same Messiah and the same prophecies, stakes his hopes of salvation and of escape from hell upon the fact that this same prophesied Christ came into the world and saved it near 2000 years ago, and have, from age to age, ever since, been anxiously looking for his prophesied "second coming" and the end of the world. The Jews actually saw and knew the man the Christians now worship as the promised Jewish Messiah and Saviour, and denounced him as an impostor and traitor; and, finally, had him ignominiously executed as a criminal in the midst of thieves: the Christians worship him as Christ and God. And yet, each clings to the infallibility of the inspired word and the truth of the prophecies upon which they both depend. What a safe and reliable light to guide Humanity! What an infallible *assurance* for the salvation of the Race and for the hopes of the world! What God-like precision, perspicuity and practical efficiency!

MIRACLES.

Of a piece with the old notions of the reality of revelations and dreams, and woven from the same materials as witchcraft and devil-possession, is the belief in miracles; and like them, also, it has ceased to be realizable to the modern mind, and is fast fading out of the list of possible credibilities. If the present belief were at all the product of modern reason, or was in any manner

dependent upon it, the very idea of miracles would long since have been discarded. There is the same Scriptural authority, and equal reason, for the truth of the discarded and despised beliefs in dreams, sorcery, charms and devil-possession as there is for inspiration and miracles ; and yet these have fallen into utter contempt, while the latter beliefs still maintain a certain hold upon the popular mind. The Protestant World carry their inconsistency still further, and credit the miracles anterior to the close of the Apostolic Age, and there end the "age of miracles"—rejecting modern miracles even of Christian origin. Why is it that Protestants, then, cling to these beliefs while discarding equally rational and Scriptural ones of the same brood ? Or, still stronger, why do they discard all miracles and prophecies, save the ancient ones ? If miracles could exist in one age, they could exist in all ages, and there is certainly as much proof and reason to sustain the discarded miracles as the retained ones ; and there is greater need of proof of Christian divinity than ever before. The Scripture makes no intimation of such a distinction, but assures us that the power to perform these various wonders should continue to follow the Church and verify its divine origin and support—be in fact the test and passport of true believers. The evidence supporting many modern Catholic and even Mormon miracles is much more legitimate and plausible than that upon which the Scriptural miracles rest. Nothing but the *assumed infallibility* of the assertions and recitals of the New Testament gives its miracles their asserted superiority. But the same sanctity and infallibility is also thrown around witchcraft, devil-possession and other kindred errors, while witch-

craft has also the support of hundreds of thousands of judicial decisions rendered upon sworn testimony, among them those of our own New England tribunals. There must be some potent cause for this palpable inconsistency—a cause which it is by no means difficult to comprehend.

Men who have acquired a clear conception of natural, law-governed causation, would never form the idea of miracles; nor would the more modern mind have accepted it, had it not been an inheritance from our ancestors transmitted under the almost resistless executorship of the Church, aided by the coercive terrors of both temporal and eternal punishment and by the force of veneration, education and custom, and also fostered by the hopes and promises of future happiness and by man's aspirations for immortal life. This whole class of beliefs is alien to the rational thought of our Time—is in conflict with our intelligence. They can only be accepted by a *blind faith*, under the pressure of *motives*, and in defiance of reason. And as they do not originate with, or rest upon, our reason, they are not at all dependent upon it for their support, and therefore cannot be directly overthrown by it. To even an enlightened Christian, of our day, the suspension or reversal of the natural laws and efficiencies of the Universe and the very fact of either arbitrary and lawless volition or lawless causation, anywhere, are incomprehensible. He can only accept them as mysteries transcending his powers of conception and contradicting his rational convictions. The *motives* for their acceptance are so strong as to make him accept them, although he cannot see how it is possible for them

to exist. Science and Reason have shown him their impossibility, but both have failed to go further and also furnish him the desired substitute for the cherished theory which propounds and rests upon these assailed beliefs. They have rationally undermined the basis of his hopes, but they leave unsatisfied the fundamental and resistless life-aspiration of the Soul, which Christianity lamely fosters and feeds. They have demonstrated the insecurity of the Christian haven, but they have neither furnished a new anchor, nor pointed to a new port. They have offered the soul only negation and doubt ;—a food upon which it cannot live. For the masses, any hope is better than none, even if it be a delusive one. It is only the exceptional Soul that can continue to live in the vacuum of Negation. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the conquests of Reason and Science have failed to be commensurate with their intellectual triumphs. It was natural that men should have jealously resisted every attack threatening the authority which had signed and sealed their own title-deeds to immortality, and had given them their coveted assurance of a Divine Redeemer and a protecting God. Their title-deeds may be illegitimate, but they constitute the only title offered. It was only inch by inch that they yielded their outposts—such as dreams, devil-possession, witchcraft, and modern prophecy and miracles. They felt that every scriptural belief they yielded weakened the sanctity and authority of their title-deed. Under the full pressure of rational and scientific demonstrations, they have gradually abandoned such of their irrational beliefs as were not deemed absolutely necessary to their faith. But to abandon the inspiration and the miracu-

lous gifts of the very founders of their faith, was to yield the very foundations of their entire pretensions. It is for this reason that these beliefs have survived all their kindred. It is here, then, on the "ragged edge" of Necessity, that Protestantism has taken its last and untenable stand: a position more advanced, but less logical and consistent, than that of the Catholic. They have yielded too much not to yield more. A blind faith in an infallible authority once abandoned, there is no permanent foot-hold or rest for an *irrational* creed.

No enlightened Protestant can disguise to himself the fact that, not only these old bible-beliefs have been abandoned or become untenable, but that the very basis and fundamental beliefs upon which our popular Faith rests,—such as the "creation by *fiat*;" the doctrines of "original sin and condemnation;" of man's primitive purity and his fall and degradation from his "high estate;" of his utter depravity and hopeless indebtedness to God for penalties incurred, and the necessity for a divine blood-offering as a vicarious atonement, or payment and discharge of the debts and penalties due from Humanity; of salvation by the mere act of having a blind faith in that which is in itself rationally incredible and impossible of belief save by a divine "enabling act;" and the doctrine of a hell and endless punishment,—are all growing, or have already grown, too palpably erroneous and unrealizable for continued belief. The consciousness of this fact is being manifested, almost

every day, in the higher Protestant writings and teachings. It has become next to impossible for an honest and informed mind to resist or evade the proofs that man has developed from a savage state instead of having fallen from a semi-angelic one—that he has, in fact, progressed instead of retrograded. And yet, if this old doctrine of “the fall” be a mistake, the infallibility of the sacred record and the whole fabric of Christian theology vanishes at once. For the reasons already given, and for those alone, is the doctrine of miracles now supported in any form; and that support would cease, at least so far as Protestants are concerned, the moment Rationalism can furnish a rational hope of a God and immortality.

It is easy to understand how “Moses and the prophets,” as well as the Apostles, could believe in miracles. With their conceptions of causation and of God, it was not only rationally possible, but quite natural and consistent, for them to entertain such beliefs. There was no such mental inconsistency involved in their beliefs—no such conflict with their reason as there is in the case of men who comprehend natural law and natural causation. A miracle to them was not at all what it is to us. It was neither a suspension, nor reversal of the “laws of Nature,” nor a disregard of natural causation; since they had no knowledge of the existence of either. The very idea which constitutes a miracle *to us*, was impossible to them. To them, it was not an incomprehensible

or unnatural procedure. It neither required nor introduced any new kind of agency or power ; nor any new, or even unusual, mode of causation ; nor was it even confined to an exercise of divine power. They believed, as has been said, that there was but one kind of causation, and that was the one which we now regard miraculous,—namely : personal and voluntary causation. They regarded even the ordinary course of Nature as the result of the Divine Will. The Earth and all things had been willed into being by God's volition, and still existed and acted by His will. He held them as in the "hollow of his hand," and could change the capricious will by which they had always moved and existed, to suit his mere pleasure and arbitrary purpose ; and often did so at the solicitation of his favorites. They could hear or read without surprise that God had expressly raised up Pharaoh and hardened his heart to act as he did, to show the direct and complete divine agency and rule of God in, and over, all things, even over kings and over the very minds, dispositions and specific feelings, thoughts and actions of men. The only thing worthy of note, to them, in God's stopping the Sun to please Joshua and to give him ampler time to slaughter his adversaries, was not in the fact or nature of the act, but in the extent of the divine favor and condescension thus shown to His Jewish favorite. Beyond this, it had no special significance. God could as easily and as consistently stop the Sun as to keep it going : it was but a mere act of changing a capricious will. They did not confine this power over natural objects to their Creator, but believed that other spirits, good and bad, had a like power, subject to the overruling power of the Omnipotent, to control

nature and even to change the original or accustomed order established and maintained by God's will, and to thus thwart the divine purposes. They supposed that these divine and spiritual beings could either take possession, and act through, mortal bodies, or could delegate their powers over nature to human beings, and imagined that the persons so favored by gods or demons could exert these superhuman powers in the name and by the authority of their principals. The devil and his imps, and the magicians who worked by their power and appointment, could perform as unquestionable miracles as those of God's favorites. The feats claimed to be miracles were supposed to be merely *superhuman*, not *supernatural*; and men who could perform feats of thaumaturgy or of hidden knowledge or skill which were beyond the comprehension or skill of the observers, were supposed to work by the power of some divine or demoniac spirit :—that is, by miraculous or invisible agencies. Miracle-working was the exertion of spiritual power through human agency. The only question of doubt or difficulty was as to the source and extent of the power ;—chiefly, whether it were from Heaven or from Hell. The rod of the Egyptian priests worked miracles, only Aaron's rod worked greater. The early Christians no more doubted the miracles of Simon Magus than they did those of Simon Peter ; and Jesus himself acknowledged the presence and *power* of devils as freely as he claimed the power from a still higher spiritual source to "cast them out" of the devil-possessed, and to o'ermaster them ; while the Jews, without caring to deny or question his powers, charged him with being possessed of a devil himself and with working by the power of Beelze-

bub—the prince of devils. Beyond the possible utility of a supposed miracle, such as that of healing, the value of miracles consisted in their supposed proof of their worker's mission or claims—of his speaking and acting for a higher power. The special wonder and honor attending even the “works” of Jesus were not on account of the miraculousness of the power exercised, but on account of its supposed and asserted divine origin. The world was then full of conceded miracle-workers, but Jesus, for a while, excited special attention by his peculiar acts and claims, and crowds flocked around him,—the sick to be healed, the Jew to inspect the person and test the pretensions of their pretended Messiah.

It is clear, from the facts stated, that the men of those early times did not so much err from their failure to reason, or from their false reasoning, as they did from their false conceptions and lack of knowledge concerning all causation. From their own false premises they reasoned well enough, and were consistent enough. Men of our day, however, can claim no such consistency and rationality in accepting their conclusions while rejecting their premises. The utter falsity of the notions concerning causation upon which those early men founded their belief in miracles is now conceded; and logic and consistency required that we should have abandoned their conclusions when we discarded their premises. It has certainly become manifest to all unbiased, competent minds, that the causative power or

evolutive energy of the Universe is indestructible and persistent, and that, under every set of circumstances and conditions, it is definite and unalterable in character and amount, and must, of necessity, prove adequate to produce equivalent and definite results in certain law-governed modes ;—in short, that the Universe is a unique, interdependent whole, evolving and moving by persistent and definite energies or natural causes or efficiencies, and in obedience to natural, universal and unchangeable laws. These new unquestionable facts render miracles an impossibility. To my own mind it is equally apparent and conclusive, from the known facts, that the tendencies and energies or efficiencies by which all known Being is moved and guided, are inherent in itself ; that the Universe is self-efficient, self-supporting, self-intelligent, self-evolving and self-guiding ; and that no Being is, or can be, moved by either a foreign or outside will or energy, or be governed by the inclinations, preferences, laws, or modes of existence or action of another Being.

But there are still other considerations which are fatal to miracles. If God had really created the Universe, and willed and controlled all its movements, as is contended by the real believers in miracles, still, God, having the attributes they now claim for Him, neither could, nor would, think, will, or act capriciously or changeably ; nor could, or would, He create anything that could do so, or that could act counter to His own will, desire and purpose. God would necessarily have some natural mode of being, thinking and acting and some definite nature and proclivities of His own, and these would necessarily be persistent and perfect in themselves and

definite in their character, laws and modes of manifestation under every contingency, and not double, doubtful or variable. This much would be an *a priori* necessity to all self-existent Being, but more manifestly so to an absolute and perfect God. It is also manifest that there could be *but one best and perfect* mode of thinking, concluding and acting. To alter or change, is to prove either that the original, or that the altered, thought, purpose or action was wrong or imperfect. Being different, they cannot both be perfect and best. Whatever, therefore, is perfect and best, a perfect Creator and Ruler would, in the first place, provide for and *insure*. Whatever was otherwise than perfect and best would be impossible to Him, under all circumstances, as well as to all things emanating from Him. Such a Being could not think, will, or act arbitrarily or capriciously, of its own nature or volition; nor could it be induced to do wrong; nor would it need inducement to do what is right. Nor could or would God create anything of whose movements and destiny He was not prescient and assured; and as the contemplated results would necessarily be both designed and absolutely right, there could neither be need, nor possibility of change, since every possible change of His modes or purposes would be for the worst. To charge God with such alterations of inclination, methods or purpose, or with the creation of anything which could or would necessitate or require an alteration of His original design and purpose in its creation, is to derogate from His perfections and Godhood. And again: as the Universe is an interdependent whole, to change the efficiencies, laws and modes of action of any one part, would necessitate an incalculable

amount of corresponding and counter changes to readjust the general course of Nature, and every such change would have to be effected by a suitable change of the original and natural energies, laws and proclivities of every particle of matter concerned, which would require a change of the very nature of the Materials upon which they depend. Such frequent "special providences" and solicited changes, awarded to mere human desires and prayers, would necessitate endless and inconceivable alterations and disturbances in the character and evolutions of matter, and would render a consistent, orderly and law-governed course of Nature impossible.

And again: the causation and changes in such a Universe as ours, could not possibly be effected by acts of personal volition. Personality implies individuality or oneness, and involves, not only unity of being or organization, but unity of consciousness; and this individuality and unity of consciousness involves a unity of conscious thought, volition and mental action, with the necessary result of their *seriality* or singly successive order. From the very nature of personality, no individual or person can perform more than one act of volition at a time. The infinity of personal, simultaneous acts of attention and volition which a capricious, or even *any* voluntary, government and control of the Universe would require, would be impossible to any one person, however infinite or potent,—would, indeed, require a special and several consciousness and Will for the government of every one of the severally-acting atoms of the Universe. It is true, also, that personal consciousness and volition are, by their very nature, a state and action of the indi-

vidual mind or being itself, and are therefore confined to itself. Mental states and actions are wholly internal and subjective. No being can be conscious of anything outside of itself, nor can any being think or act outside of itself or where it is not present. Nor is Will an attribute of a completed and perfect being. It implies mental stimulant and exertion, and a conflict between tendencies to different actions or between action and non-action :— a state of things which is not possible with an absolute, perfect, self-active Intelligence. Will can only be an attribute of a related, influenced and incomplete being with unsatisfied desires and imperfectly co-ordinated and adjusted powers and action. An absolute, satisfied and perfect being would necessarily act by the untrammelled and harmonious energies, modes and laws of its own being, and would, therefore, exist, think and act without conflict, doubt, hesitancy or delay, or the necessity of voluntary determination or exertion. Its thoughts, desires and energies would continuously unfold, and flow into action as intuitively and definitely as its own self-conscious life-action, requiring as little volition or effort as self-consciousness itself.

Doubtlessly there are intelligent men who still *think* they believe that miracles *once* existed, but only under the blinding influences of desire and motive—of policy, interest, inherited and trained feelings and proclivities,

education, associations, public opinion and other motives and aspirations touching their future life and condition already alluded to. Their reason is either silenced, or suborned and subsidized, by other influences than reason and evidence. How miracles could have ever existed, or why they once existed and then ceased to exist, are mysteries which they can only *accept*, not comprehend. Were their reason allowed to play its legitimate part, they could not fail to perceive that, if miracles were ever possible, or ever necessary to man's faith in the claims of Jesus, they are still equally possible and still more necessary to the present than to the Apostolic Age. To have the assertion of unknown men as to the existence of ancient miracles, or as to certain "wonderful works" performed before ignorant people 2,000 years ago—before people who regarded what we would deem *super-natural* agencies and methods as the *only* and *natural* ones, and miracles as simply a superhuman or spiritual exercise of the only kind of causation—before people who were utterly ignorant of our very ideas of natural law and natural causation, and who regarded all physical and mental action and changes as the results of some arbitrary and capricious personal volition—before people who believed that both man and nature were constantly subject to such spiritual caprices and changes, and that they were surrounded by witches and by persons filled and "possessed" by any number of living, speaking devils, from one to thousands,—to have the assertion of all this by some unknown man having like intelligence and beliefs, we say, is literally *no* proof of miracles to *us*, at all. Who would now think of trusting the testimony or accounts of the ignorant Catholics of Portugal or

Brazil as to the miracles of their professed Saints of our own time, or of the Mormons as to those of their inspired leaders Smith and Young, or of the modern Spiritualists to the "materialization" of ghosts, or of a Fetichist of Congo to the miraculous performances of his fetisch, although they might even personally know the witnesses and believe them honest, and hear their recitals directly from their own lips? The same kind of miracles as those recorded in the New Testament, even to the "resurrection from the dead," are still claimed to be performed now, and are still believed in, and testified to, by the same class of people who believed in, and testified to, those of the Apostolic Age; and they always will be performed so long as people can be found who are capable of believing in them. But the moment men have developed beyond the point of believing them, they cease to exist. A miracle or miracle-worker can neither be engendered, nor survive, in the transparent atmosphere of Rationalism. Persons having minds capable of believing in them, are *incapable* of being competent witnesses to verify their existence, or to furnish to others the necessary facts and details to determine the fact of their existence for themselves, no matter how honest they are. Their own faith is not only undoubting, but unquestioning, and they neither know, nor apply, the necessary precautions and tests, nor secure the necessary safeguards against errors and imposition. Mere appearances which are incomprehensible or marvellous to *them*, is at once set down as miraculous, and they would be amazed, if not indignant, if their unguarded and "off-hand" observations and inferences were not accepted as conclusive. The very facts and

omissions which would arrest the attention of a Rationalist, would probably never attract their attention, or, even if noticed, would be deemed unworthy of repetition. They take for granted, consciously or unconsciously, the very fact which is to be proved ; and this fact alone renders them incompetent judges, and therefore incompetent witnesses and reporters. They are mere credulous on-lookers, not investigators. They tell the appearances which arrested their senses, or their own inferences from them, with reference to their own views or without any reference at all to their significance or value ; and their hearer or reader's best hope of comprehending the true nature of the performance lies in their mere chance notice of the details and conditions. They may stumble into reporting a significant fact. Almost any evidence, even common report or rumor, was sufficient to prove to such men the fact of what they considered a miracle. To them, the matter was a mere question of veracity. To us who regard a miracle in a wholly different light and as a different thing from what they did, the matter of veracity itself sinks into insignificance in comparison with the very question which they take for granted, namely,—the very fact or possibility of miracles. A body of Scientists would doubtlessly regard the Gospel record as unauthentic or at least as unverified, and would certainly regard its recitals, even if authentic and admissible, as wholly incompetent and inconclusive proof of miracles ; but such questions would never be reached by such a tribunal. The evidence of a host of Bayards and Solomons would be insufficient to prove a miracle to such men. In their sense and to their minds, a miracle is impossible ; and phenomena, however in-

comprehensible or marvellous to them, even if witnessed by themselves, would have no tendency to convince them of supernatural agency or capricious and lawless causation. The conception of natural law and causation was not more impossible to the superstitious believers in witches and devil-possession of Capernaum, than is that of miracles to a modern Scientist; and it would be more difficult for the latter to believe in capricious or voluntary Spiritual interference with the laws and order of nature, than for the former to doubt it. Such beliefs are perfectly natural and legitimate from the stand-point and fundamental notions of the one; while they are utterly inconsistent with the knowledge and convictions of the other. It is no more possible for such men as Tyndall, Huxley, Helmholtz and Du Bois-Raymond to realize or credit a genuine miracle, than it is for them to believe in the old notion of the daily revolution of the Sun round the Earth, which the earlier believers in miracles made it heresy to deny.

Doubtlessly, in the age of Jesus, there were men among the Jews sufficiently enlightened and sufficiently skeptical to have detected ordinary imposture and to have transmitted to us more satisfactory accounts of the performances of Jesus; but they neither witnessed them, nor were permitted to witness them, although solicitous to do so. Jesus only performed before certain persons

and classes, with restrictions determined by the special nature of each performance. The fishermen and other rabble or "multitudes" along the shores of the Galilean Sea were permitted to witness some of them; others were reserved for the eyes of his special and chosen followers and witnesses; while still others were confided exclusively to the observation and testimony of the favorite *trio* among the apostles—Peter, James and John. Before Kings, Rulers, Priests and the educated classes he flatly and insultingly refused to perform at all; and even the ignorant rabble, save his special and chosen witnesses, finally discredited his miraculous pretensions and deserted him.

If, therefore, the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus required to be evidenced by miracles to an age so credulous of such pretensions and powers, and still failed to secure the general belief, how much more should we expect the same or even far higher evidences in subsequent critical and rationalistic ages? Why should a few men of the first age, alone, have these necessary proofs to secure their adhesion and salvation, while all after generations were compelled to depend upon doubtful records of mere assertions and rumors of transactions, among an ancient and superstitious people, which failed to satisfy a great majority of eye-witnesses? Is it the act of a good God to decrease already insufficient evidence, just in proportion to the need of such evidence and the difficulty of believing it, and especially when there is no possible reason

for such discontinuance, and there are scriptural inducements for anticipating the reverse? If it is desirable for men to believe in the Christ of Galilee, is it also desirable to make it as difficult as possible to believe, and for it to become more impossible with every step in their progressive intelligence? Was it not enough, that God should have made the salvation of his creatures depend upon evidence which was, confessedly and at the best, incredible to the "wise and prudent" and fit only for the credulity of "babes," without wilfully withdrawing even such evidence, and leaving it to a disputed and garbled record of the sayings, beliefs and hearsays of those early and specially selected "babes?" Surely this is incredible. Why, then, we repeat, have Protestants rejected all modern miracles and abandoned all notion of their ever occurring again? Must there not be a cause outside of reason for this? Is it not clear that Protestants are rapidly developing beyond the point where a belief in miracles is possible? Is it not clear that they now only blindly *accept* them as a *dernier resort* under the pressure of the motives already considered, and not with the "living faith" and approving reason of the fishermen of Galilee? Is it not clear that the same causes which rendered the scriptural doctrines of witchcraft and devil-possession, as well as modern inspiration, prophecy and miracles unbelievable, must also render the equally irrational scriptural miracles and inspirations equally incredible to all intelligent minds, and compel such minds to relegate them to the old lumber-room of worn-out beliefs and superstitions, to there dry-rot among other once-useful and natural, but now cast-off, fancies of human infancy?

HADES.

Another of our orthodox beliefs is, the existence of a Hell—a specific place into which the unbelieving, the unredeemed, together with the “nations that forget God,” are cast, as a place of eternal torment and punishment of the most fiery and inconceivable severity. Let us examine the source and value of this notion, also.

We have already seen how men come to believe in the primal fall and subsequent degeneracy of their race and in their obligation and indebtedness to God as a Divine Sovereign or King. We have seen, also, how men developed ever-growing ideals of life, duty and conduct, and how these ideals necessarily engendered dissatisfaction and disgust with their existing lives and conduct, as well as a profound conviction of the personal frailty and wickedness of themselves and fellows. Nature's inducements and incitements of man are like those resorted to by man himself—are such as are capable of affecting man's nature and conduct, and consist of *persuasives* and *deterrents*, operating by way of rewards and punishments, and also by the hopes and fears thereof. She is, not only necessitated to use these persuasive and deterrent methods in all conscious development, but is compelled to use man's own imperfect nature and ideas as her instruments,—especially in her development of his moral nature. To secure the continuance of the species and its physical development, she had been compelled to highly develop the selfish nature and proclivities of the individuals composing it. Out of this absorbing selfishness she was then compelled to evolve the means of

elevating man to the higher plane of the Unselfish. The Selfish she finds to be a useful means for urging to those associations and relations which will engender the sympathies underlying the unselfish and moral nature. But she also finds that this selfish nature is, primarily, largely antagonistic to the moral nature she would develop, and that she is compelled to use stringent correctives and restraints to check and control it. Consequently we find the conscience, the sense of responsibility and duty, the burning aspirations and growing ideals engendered by, and during, the processes of moral development, not only operating as potent stimulants to moral progress, but impelling men to use all the coercive and punitive means in their own power to deter themselves from moral derelictions. But it early became apparent to developing people, of ungovernable natures, that the indolence, rapacity, violence and fraud flowing from Selfishness should be, and deserved to be, put down by the utmost *fear* and *punishment*. These punishments were, at first, purely physical and temporary. But the experiences of many races soon demonstrated that the hopes of escaping detection and of avoiding either conviction or the effects of conviction, so far weakened the fears inspired by human laws and penalties as to render them insufficient motives to restrain men's brutal, passionate and selfish natures. Temptation was potent and present, the punishment was remote and problematical; and rude and unreflecting minds gave way under the more powerful and immediate pressure. Nor were early men capable of appreciating, much less of carrying out, such maxims as that—"Honesty is the best policy," and "Virtue is its own reward;" nor

were they satisfied with the known rewards achieved in those days by the more gentle, peaceful and sympathetic of their race. Clearly, something else was necessary to curb such undeveloped natures—some *fear* of a punishment which was as *sure* as it was *terrible*. This desired deterrent was found in a belief in a divine King and Judge and divine laws with endless punishments—in divine judgments which were inexorable and a divine Ruler and Judge whose all-seeing eye penetrated the very secrets of all hearts, and permitted no possible avoidance of detection, whose infinite wisdom and exacting justice permitted no chance of escaping conviction, and whose omnipotent arm forbid all hope of escaping the eternal penalty decreed. This spiritual remedy served to powerfully supplement the restraints of earthly penalties by enlisting man's ignorance and superstition in aid of his own moral development, and thus overawing his brutality and selfishness by his fears of the Unknown and by horrors only limited by the failure of the powers of his own imagination.

A confirmation of this view will be found in the fact, that there is a striking correspondence between both the temporal and spiritual codes of various peoples and between both codes and their own characters and the restraint their natures call for, as well as between their own degrees of severity at different times and for different offences. It is the wicked and frail who feel the need of the severest restraints and who concoct the

most stringent and cruel remedies. The codes of barbaric peoples are proverbially cruel and bloody, while the pirate and bandit knows no remedy but instant death. We find, also, that the criminal codes of peoples become mollified as they become law-abiding and tractable. There has been a growing tendency in the Anglo-Saxon race to abolish the death penalty, even for the last and most abhorrent of crimes, while scarcely more than a century ago there were over a hundred crimes punishable with death in England. And yet these brutal penalties were enacted and supported by the people themselves. The spiritual codes of peoples exhibit the same confirmatory correspondence, at least where they are original. The unseen penalties of such codes are found to bear a direct relation to the visible ones and to the character of the people to be influenced. They are a reflex of the moral nature of the people who invented and support them. Partially developed peoples who have mild and tractable natures never originate beliefs in endless torments. It is only the more fiery, obstinate and ungovernable races who need, and therefore resort to, these terrible penalties and appalling fears. This correspondence is further exemplified in the progressive amelioration or "toning down" of these fiery spiritual codes as peoples become moral and humane. With the progress of civilization and development the more cruel features of such codes are gradually ignored and become "dead letters" on the statute book—become rather remembered and undisputed dogmas than realized beliefs. As men rise entirely above the plane of Superstition, such beliefs become impossible to them—become absurd, in every point of view, as facts, whatever may have been

their utility as beliefs. They learn to regard the Universe as a unique, law-governed whole, and God as the all-embracing All-Father, and cease to look upon the Divine Personality either as a dreaded King or as an inexorable Judge and Executioner. Such minds are compelled, not only to discard all notion of such a *place* as Hell, but all idea of future punishment and, indeed, of any divine punishment of a retributive kind, as well as the whole idea of man's fall and retrogression, and his penal indebtedness to God and all the crude notions based upon it. They cannot but perceive, that such conceptions are purely of human origin, and savor of their crude paternity ; that this whole chain of conceptions is at once incompatible with a law-governed Universe, a libel upon the beneficent All-Father, and a *purposeless* cruelty and vindictiveness to the condemned spirit, alike useless to it or to God, and a bar to the happiness and enjoyment of the redeemed friends and relatives of the lost soul. They can recognize the utility of the *belief* in a hell, and the *fears* it inspires, to rude races who can entertain such crude beliefs ; while they perceive that the *fact* of endless torments would be at once useless, impossible and diabolical. They perceive that the originators of such beliefs have been inspired by the *needs of man's nature in this life*, rather than by any rational and appreciative conception of God and of his relations to his creatures, or of the condition of man in a future life. Doubtlessly there were many things observed in natural evolution which, viewed from an ignorant and human stand-point, tended to give early men low and mistaken notions of God's justice and beneficence, which shaped their notions of his designs and

methods. Such was their conception of Heavenly justice that it required the invention and the intervention of a divine *equity* or Heavenly Chancery to supplement and mollify its decrees—God's mercy suspending and reversing the laws and decrees of his own justice :—as if God's attributes could conflict, or as if his justice could be *less* than exactly right, or his mercy more than, or different from, what was exactly right! No doubt the hereditary effects of sin or of breaches of natural law, entailing misery on innocent offspring "to the tenth generation," the inexorability of natural law and the apparent inadequacy and unfairness of the earthly punishments for immoralities and of the distribution of the rewards for virtue, aided in engendering the idea of future rewards and punishments.

The fact is, that men's hells, like their heavens, are but reflexes of their own natures. They are born of their own aspirations and needs, and are continually modified to suit them. They are self-adjusted stimulants to their progress. Man's persistent desires and needs will always compel some suitable satisfaction and response in his own beliefs. If those desires and needs demand aid or assurances from the Invisible World, such demand ever brings a supply, by means of dreams, visions and revelations. And so long as the assurances received correspond with the needs and desires calling them forth, neither their irrationality nor unreliability will deter the mass of mankind from entertaining and

cherishing them. Man cannot live and act without beliefs, and must form such as are adequate and possible to his nature and condition. Nature is necessarily compelled to be wholly self-efficient and self-evolving, and the peoples of primitive ages could have had no kind missionaries or patient and enlightened instructors to enlighten, aid and stimulate them, but were compelled to blindly stumble forward by their own lights and energies,—correcting one imperfection by means of others and jostling themselves and their conduct into shape and guidance by such motive-impulses and desires as they possessed, and with such constructions of Nature, such notions of causation and God, and such compromises of opinions and desires as were then possible to them. Truth, for its own sake, was a matter of indifference. That their notions should have been, not only selfish, but provisional and erroneous, and have constituted a reflex, not of the facts, but of the imperfect minds and the necessities which demanded and inspired them, was a necessity founded in the very nature of progressive development, since progressive improvement implies previous imperfection or error.

No better proof and exemplification of this self-adaptive law of human nature could be required than the existence and the various phases of this same belief in a hell and future punishment. For, independent of all other inconsistencies and absurdities which the belief involves, the true scriptural idea of torturing an immortal soul—an indestructible and unconsumable “spiritual body”—by fire, is absurdly impossible; since the pain caused by fire is a result of the change or disorganization

effected by the heat. An indestructible body is necessarily impervious to pain, because it cannot suffer that disintegration or derangement of parts which is the source of pain and which all pain implies. Besides, were it possible to predicate pain of such a body, a perpetual state and condition that were even once painful, would gradually become less and less so until it ultimately became the *accustomed life-mode* of such being. Pain is not only confined, by its very origin and nature, to the disorganizable and mortal, but is also *temporary* in its duration. The very state which is painful, if not fatal, must some time cease to be felt as painful. Nor is this doctrine less absurd in making the Devil the willing instrument in torturing his own followers, and in depicting him as desirous of inveigling men into eternal suffering for their very loyalty and obedience to himself and for the sole end of carrying out the decrees and purposes of that God against whom he has rebelled and wages eternal and spiteful war! Were not these childish notions the make-shifts of childish races? Is not such a being and such a state of things unrealizable to the developed mind? As human nature ceases to need the restraints of such superstitious fears, and human intelligence supplies higher inducements and incentives to devotion and morality, must not the entire belief in a Hell gradually fade out of the minds of all men?

We have now briefly considered the origin, progress and value of our more important popular religious beliefs. In doing this, we have found that man's religious notions are at once a product and a means of his development, and that, although born of his needs and aspirations, they gradually conform themselves to his psychical development and his conceptions of causation so far as may be consistent or compatible with his fundamental aspirations for immortality and happiness. We shall find, in the end, that all conflict between this imperishable aspiration of man and his developed reason must end in a union, in which the aspiration will rest satisfied in the assurances and conviction furnished by Reason. We have seen that, prior to this ultimate conviction and satisfaction, the course and order of religious development have been those of a law-governed process of evolution, and that they have been substantially the same among all naturally developed peoples, only exhibiting the necessary differences incident to differences of character and conditions and of their intellectual, moral, political, social and commercial developments and relations. We have also seen how Reason has been warped by inclination, and compelled to pay homage to Need and Desire, and how its progress has been retarded by men's veneration for the Old,—by their ascription of sanctity and infallibility to ancient writings, and by the superstitious hopes and fears such writings have inspired; and how Reason and Science are alike impotent as antagonists to the fundamental beliefs in the existence of a God and of the existence and immortality of the soul. We have seen how Reason and Fact have progressively triumphed over the errors and supersti-

tions of the past, until they stand before the last of the old and feeble ramparts which have been thrown around these invincible beliefs—invincible because resting directly upon the fundamental and true. We have seen that it has become apparent that their further triumph must be won, not by ignoring religion or the true significance of the fundamental life-aspiration which underlies all development, but by wresting them from the grasp of Superstition by *rationally satisfying them*. Until this is done, it matters not how irrational and feeble may be their old supports, men will still cling to them, or invent new ones, even though they floated, for their sole support, upon an abyss of inanity. But once render man's supernatural supports no longer necessary to him, by giving him natural and rational ones, and they will sink forever into the inane void upon which they have ever rested, and Rational Religion will rightfully succeed to the dominion which Supernaturalism has so long provisionally held. Supernaturalism was born of Fetichism, and its sole rational basis has ever been the childish, fetichistic reason from which it sprung. This puerile and flimsy base has long been honeycombed by Time and riddled by the shots of Rationalism, until it remains but an unsightly thing of shreds and tags. Supernaturalism no longer really supports either Religion or itself, but clings pendent to the imperishable aspiration which supports them both :—clouding the fair face of Religion like the dead, but unshed, skin of the serpent.

When men, instead of being taught that the very Substance of the Universe is base and evil, and that Nature is perverted and at war with God and itself, shall be shown that the essential Being composing the Universe is *the one* intelligent and self-sufficient Existence,—which is, in itself, altogether ineffable and transcendental ; and that the known Universe, which is so maligned and derided, is the sole manifestation of the divine All-Father—that it constitutes a unique and eternally-self-evolving whole, whose every form and product is divine in origin and purpose,—whose every process is infinitely wise and absolutely necessary for the ends designed,—and whose real and ultimate purposes and ends are divinely perfect and beneficent,—in short, that the Absolute is to be found in the one Reality which *is*, and that the absolute Good is to be found in Nature's actual processes and ends,—the absolutely Necessary in her means,—and the absolutely Wise in her processes and methods,—and not in their own short-sighted, ever-changing and delusive conceptions of the Divine, True and Good, which are born of their own relative and mortal feelings ideas and desires :—when they are shown (as we aver they rationally can be), that all evil is relative and temporary, and constitutes a necessary part of the agencies and processes of Absolute Beneficence in securing the primal evolution, the development, and the final and progressive beatitude and intellectual progress of immortal Souls—when these things shall be made rationally manifest, we say (as we repeat they can be,) then Supernaturalism, in all its forms, will perish from sheer inanition.

Thus, we have found our moral and religious faculties and our moral and religious ideas and beliefs to be natural progressive developments, having a course and progress running substantially parallel and *pari passu* with those of man's intellectual, political and social development, each being a legitimate part of human evolution,—reciprocally aiding and correcting each other, and each born of, and borne up by, the same great fundamental life-aspiration underlying all conscious development, and constituting the tap-root and trunk of the great, wide-branching motive-tree of life. It remains to be seen whether this same aspiration for ever-continued, and higher, life has developed further fruit on this same branch of Supernaturalism—whether, indeed, it does not constitute the very tap-root and basic fact or vital support of Christianity itself, as it has been shown to be of older religions.

CHAPTER II.

THE TAP-ROOT OR BASIC FACT OF CHRISTIANITY.

WHAT was the essential idea which distinguished Christianity from other religious developments existing at its advent, and which secured its propagation and popular reception? It could not have been its moral doctrines, since it propounded none which had not already engaged the attention of mankind long before the birth of Jesus. Nor could any mere reformatory code of morals or set of moral ideas have inspired the enthusiasm and devotion, or secured the zeal, self-sacrifice and persistence, exhibited in the history of Christianity. In fact the periods of her greatest zeal and success have been signalized by anything but high moral notions or conduct. Nor could it have been the introduction of new theological dogmas or theories, for it avowedly claims to be only an extension of Jewish Theology and a fulfilment of Jewish prophecies, and it accepts, entire, the Jewish Scriptures; and we know that early Christians claimed to be in harmony in their theological beliefs with their Jewish brethren, save as to Jesus. Nor could it have been new forms or rituals, for neither Jesus nor his apostles ordained or established any.

Nor could it have been the mere doctrine of a future life or a belief in its rewards and punishments, since the hope and fear of these had long influenced men ; and were then controlling doctrines and beliefs among the Pharisees. Certainly there were a number of ancillary and subordinate motives and stimulants that gave vitality and vigor to the primitive Church, as well as many existing conditions favoring its development. But in this great revolutionary movement, as in all others, there must have been some consideration which was essential and fundamental—something which constituted the back-bone of the movement and without which it could not have existed. What was this essentiality? Let us venture to assert that it was not a new idea or even a new emotion at all, which gave vitality to Christianity. It was an accredited *fact*, and not an idea or emotion, which inspired the founders of Christianity—a fact supposed to give practical and firm assurance to an old idea and a long cherished hope :—no less an idea and hope, in fact, than that of eternal life and happiness, born of the fundamental life-aspiration of the Soul. Christianity did not add even a new feature or phase to these ideas, nor was such an addition the “ need of the time.” What she really offered constituted the fundamental spiritual need of her Converts,—namely : a new and higher assurance—a practical proof of a future life, and a sure mode for their escaping the consequences of their earthly sins and securing endless beatitude. Men already *believed* in a future life and in their power to make it a happy one by obedience to divine law, and there had been many professed restorations of human bodies to life after their apparent death,—prior to the restoration

of Jesus ; but all these were, or might have been, natural restorations from seeming death, or might have been effected through the intervention of human agencies, and not by the *spiritual* power of the dead themselves or by the direct intervention of God in a manifest case of actual and real death. A body might be restored from seeming death by the agency of the physician or magician, but so could a dog or dead fly,—things which had no souls. What was needed was a case of unquestioned actual death, and an exhibition of the voluntary return of the soul to the body—a *self-resurrection*, or the return of a witness from the dead by the power of God, who should bear witness to the desired truths under the surety and sanction of this direct divine endorsement.

This, then, was what was needed and demanded by the fundamental aspiration of the souls of men as they stood developed in the days of Jesus ; and this was the prime fact which the founders and propagators of Christianity offered. The essential and basic fact of Christianity was the asserted resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Christianity was born, not when Jesus exclaimed on the cross, "It is finished," but when he emerged alive from the sepulchre of Joseph of Aramathea. In this instance of restored vitality it was assumed there could have been neither doubt of actual death, nor the exercise of human power or skill. It must, then, have been a divine act either by himself or by God. If performed by himself—as was believed—it proved, not only that

the Soul, which had returned to the body on the third day after death, had continued to exist during this interim of death, but also verified his claim to a divine nature, power and mission. If his return to mortal life were by the direct power of God, it did not the less show that the soul had survived the body, and to give a divine sanction to the testimony of Jesus as to the immortality of the Soul. Thus it was assumed that, in any event, the resurrection of Jesus gave an assurance of immortality and of his own divine endorsement by God himself. That he was executed,—Did not all Jerusalem bear witness? That he was seen alive in the flesh on the third day thereafter, and on numerous other occasions,—Could not the Apostles, and, as Paul declares, five hundred other witnesses, bear testimony? Was not here the proof, then, of what man had so long hoped for and believed, and had so earnestly yearned to know, as well as that hoped-for Saviour and promised Messiah who was to become the Solicitor of Humanity to secure their bankrupt discharge in the Courts of Heaven,—or better still, a receipt in full by actual payment in “divine blood” from the sacrificial offering on the Cross?

That this supposed resurrection from the dead by Jesus was the pivot upon which the whole Christian movement rested and turned is not a matter of doubt. We are left in no uncertainty as to the fact that the followers of Jesus had no previous conception of the religious movement which was set afoot shortly after the alleged resurrection, but had, up to the last, expected to

become official partakers in the Messianic reign of him whom they had hailed and heralded into Jerusalem as "King of the Jews." They were wholly unexpectant of his reappearance after the crucifixion, and were utterly surprised by, and incredulous of, his actual return ;—some of them doubting his identity even to the last. Without this return of Jesus, it is certain that his followers would have quietly returned to their ordinary pursuits as soon as their fear of the Jews permitted them to leave their place of concealment. The controlling nature of this fact is not left to inference either by the narrative of the events or the declarations of the Apostles. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv., v. 14-20) says : "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ : whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised : And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Here it will be seen that this intellectual Chief of the Apostles, and real founder of the Church, expressly and explicitly confirms the view we have taken. He here explicitly declares that all their preaching and all their faith were alike vain if Jesus did not arise from the dead by the power of God, and he insists that the existence of the departed dead and the general resurrection of mankind are dependent upon that of Jesus—that they are mutually dependent and imply each other : if the man Jesus *did* resurrect, then

there is a resurrection for man ; if he did *not* resurrect then there is no resurrection for man ; we assert that he did resurrect, and therefore affirm the resurrection and future life of man, and are the most miserable of men if we are deceived in this. Such was the reasoning. Paul claimed no new idea or new morality as the basis of his faith and preaching ; but bases Christianity, and stakes its pretensions, upon a single fundamental *fact*. If this fact was true, it was of priceless moment ; if untrue, their religion or gospel was worthless,—nay, deleterious. Here, then, we have the highest possible assurance that the same aspiration which we have found to have underlain all previous religious developments, also inspired the inauguration of Christianity, and that the essential offering of the new sect to Humanity was the evidence of an asserted *fact*, constituting a reliable assurance to the primal and persistent aspiration of man ; and that upon the truth of this fact depended its entire value. And while the matter was indubitably clear without Paul's authority, it is gratifying to have this positive endorsement from the man who knew most of, and did most for, Christianity. Paul goes so far, indeed, (in Rom. i.—vs. 3, 4,) as to directly declare that, although Jesus was the son of David according to the flesh, he was “ *declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* ” That is to say, that, owing to his resurrection, he was regarded, in a moral sense and in point of power, as a son of God—as divine. Thus clearly making the conception and declaration of his divinity to have arisen solely out of the fact of his resurrection from the dead.

The essential question touching the claims of Christianity, by its own showing, then, is as to the truth of the asserted fact of the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If the testimony, therefore, should prove adverse to this fact, or even inconclusive of its truth, upon a full, rational and candid consideration of it, such a result would be wholly fatal to the claims of Christianity. It may have a thousand vulnerable points, but a wound here is acknowledgedly fatal. But why desire to re-open the question, or seek to shake the popular hereditary belief in this cherished fact, and especially when the Author is as profoundly convinced of the fact of our psychical immortality as were Paul or Jesus? Were the result to cast a doubt upon this fundamental truth or upon the general morality inculcated by either Jesus or Paul—much of which is so admirable—there certainly would indeed be little motive beyond the mere love of truth, while there would be many dissuading motives. But this is not the sole motive, nor are those the proposed results. The *fact* of man's immortality is happily beyond human control; nor will man cease to aspire to, and believe in it, whatever may be the fate of any or all of the forms of religion which now affirm it. The ideas, methods and processes, however, which are engendered and used in the progress of man's efforts to obtain information, and to secure assurances in this matter, not only progressively differ, but are such as become noxious and obstructive to man's further development. And while St. Paul very clearly discerned the true fundamental aspiration which underlay his own movement, as well as the essential nature of the basic fact of Christianity, he did *not* perceive the most important questions involved

in the assertion of that fact, nor the falsity and future mischief of the erroneous ideas and methods which Christianity then used and sanctified to future generations. Had Paul lived *now*, he would have been a Rationalist. For although Christianity gave a new impulse to Humanity in the right direction, she not only entertained and used the old primitive ideas, methods and evidences, but used them in the old loose and imperfect manner, and sanctified them by her authority. Never was a Religion more exclusively emotional or less indebted to, and even defiant of, reason, then was Christianity. Hugging to her bosom, near 2000 years ago, the crude ideas, traditions, superstitious and supernatural methods born of a then already remote and ignorant past, but still popular with the masses, her founders boldly proclaimed a new divine dispensation based upon a fact which they themselves had credited without investigation and without sufficient rational or judicial warrant; and audaciously staked the salvation of mankind upon their unconditional, individual credence of it. Not only did they retain all the puerile ideas and beliefs of their time and the misconstrued myths, legends and theology of their remote and still more ignorant ages, but they based their beliefs and labors upon them, and attempted to irrevocably fix and fasten them on the minds of the future as divinely sanctioned facts, principles and doctrines, and to thus consummate and foreclose human progress and estop all doubt and investigation, under the pains and penalties of eternal hell-fire! What was old,—Time and Superstition had already sanctified. What was added had been received from the God, Jesus; and was both *ultimate* and *all-sufficient*.

All future change would be sacrilege, and all new knowledge superfluous. Their views of progress and the catalogue of useful knowledge were thus epitomized and graphically expressed by St. Paul:—"I desire to *know nothing* save Jesus and him crucified." Reason and human wisdom were especially and systematically derided and denounced by Jesus himself. There was but "*one thing needful*,"—Martha had chosen that "good part," by consigning to her industrious and provident sister the entire household cares and the rebukes of Jesus, and by devoting herself to the love and care of the person of the "Son of man." Man was to "take no heed of to-morrow:"—the "lilies of the field do not toil, neither do they spin." Why should man? The entire movement was based upon men's *emotions* and *faith*, and to these alone it appealed. Faith was not only subrogated to the place and offices of reason, but was forced to boldly antagonize and repudiate it. Earthly knowledge and endeavor were not only useless, but obstructive and inimical. The "Kingdom of Heaven," alone, was worth seeking; and this was alone to be won by a God-given faith, and at the expense of a renunciation of the "world" and of the "things of this life." Those who fail to perceive that such doctrines are directly and expressly antagonistic to all earthly progress, are obstinately imperceptive. Whatever controversies the history of the Church may have engendered as to the part it has played in human progress, the simplest unbiased mind cannot fail to perceive that, if the Church or its religious orders have, at any epoch, aided in the advancement of human knowledge or in the physical, intellectual, political or economic improvement of the Race, they

have done so, not in obedience to the doctrines or to the founders of Christianity, or to the notions of its early saints, but in defiance of them all. The founders of Christianity had been taught to believe that the human race were lost and undone—that they had become ruined and degraded by the participation of Adam in the fruits of the “tree of knowledge:”—that same “tree of knowledge” was their *bête noir* still. It was the ruinous results flowing from this “tree of knowledge,” which *faith* in “Jesus and Him crucified” was to overcome. They wished to save man by the “*foolishness* of preaching,” and to “know nothing save Jesus and Him crucified.”

Now, while we have no war with Christians as to their aspiration for, and belief in, immortal life and happiness, nor for the efforts of their founders to secure satisfactory evidences and assurances of their beliefs and hopes, by such conceptions and methods as were then possible to them, still we humbly submit that we have a right to protest against being denied the same privilege—against being foreclosed or estopped from either perceiving or rejecting past errors in any and every age, or from forming such ideas and beliefs, from the advanced stand-point and under the higher lights furnished by modern knowledge, reason and development, as will conform to our own mental status and furnish such assurances as is *now* possible, to satisfy our own fundamental aspirations.

Believing that the founders of Christianity, not only saddled the errors and superstitions of their age and country upon Humanity, but erred in their fundamental or basic fact itself, we have heretofore pointed out their errors, together with their origin and causes, and shall now endeavor to show that they erred in the very fundamental fact upon which their movement turned—that they accepted it without investigation and without rational and legitimate warrant—that even the recitals in the gospels do not justify their conclusion that Jesus was actually raised from the dead or was reanimated after complete and absolute death ; while the whole facts clearly show that he was not.

CHAPTER III.

THE OBSTRUCTIONS TO A FAIR DECISION OF THE
MAIN ISSUE.

THE very fact of the fundamental nature of both the fact proposed to be discussed and the aspiration which underlies and is supposed to be supported by it, make the proposed investigation a difficult one when undertaken in the presence of millions of earnest people who have staked their hopes of immortality and happiness upon its truth. There are many other facts which heighten this difficulty. The proposed effort will not only be regarded by Christians as gratuitous and unfriendly, but the popular audience will be obstinately prejudiced and bitterly antagonistic. Man's habitual mental activity has been emotional and sensuous, and not rational or critical, especially so during those early stages of his development which fixed our present mental proclivities and popular beliefs. Such early beliefs and proclivities, transmitted to us by tradition and inheritance, becomes so engrafted into our very natures, and so interwoven with our habits and lives, that we rarely, and always reluctantly, investigate them; and we are really quite incapable of subjecting them to the full

and fair tests of reason,—even if we attempted to do so. They so identify themselves with the ordinary operations of our minds and with the habitual currents of our thoughts, emotions and desires and our human interests and associations, that they are too near the established focus of our mental vision for either a clear insight or critical observation. By their coördination with, and adjustment to, our habitual life-thoughts, hopes and actions, they both color and control our mental action ; and every attempt to eradicate or change them tends to produce a painful mental hiatus or to introduce uncoördinated, discordant and deranging elements into our habitual thoughts and life-modes. We do not feel willing to concede this controlling bias in our mental action upon our own hereditary religious beliefs, but it should become manifest to us when we find that we so readily perceive the bigotry and peurility of other religionists whose pretensions differ from our own only in the fact that they are *their* pretensions and not *ours*. We can judge others with a spirit of unsparing criticism. We can subject their evidence, methods and conclusions to all, and even more than all, the rigors of logic and the inexorable conclusions of science. We seem to compensate for our blindness to just such evidences, methods and beliefs existing in our own sacred creeds and records, by the fierceness and zeal with which we demolish them in those of other people. We are inoculated with our religious beliefs in our infancy, and have them constantly instilled into us, during the earlier and more plastic period of our lives, from the sacred lips of priest and mother and with the undoubting assent of all around us ; and they are so fostered and nursed, under

this hot-house culture, that they are gradually organized into the very warp and woof of our lives, and finally harden into an undoubting, unreasoning and bigoted Faith.

To men thus warped and set, the grossest irrationalities, incongruities, contradictions, errors and even absurdities in their accepted faiths, cease to be regarded as such, or even to arrest their attention. To those born and bred within the clatter of machinery or the roar of a water-fall, their noise ceases to be even a subject of attention ; while their interruption or cessation would result in a painful sense of loss. Inbred errors glide through the well-worn mental grooves without a foot-fall being intercepted in consciousness. Even our reason has been so long forced to become the advocate and defender of our hereditary creeds, that it has become callous to their irrationalities, and falls into its routine of assigned duties with the indifference of a drilled attorney, who has only to convince himself and an over-willing jury. And should it dare question or revolt, its treason is at once stifled by dire penalties here, and by the fear of still more frightful penalties hereafter. Let any two of the many great opposing religions of the world, whose supernaturalisms and asserted divine endorsements are substantially the same, meet in controversy, and we should at once see the extent to which reason is suborned and enslaved. In such a controversy each would turn with astonishment and indignation from the

presumptuous and preposterous pretensions of the other, and would bemoan each other's obstinate and purblind credulity; and yet each will have the profound, but unconscious, audacity to claim the indubitable rationality and infallibility of its own claims and doctrines.

Such mental conditions and influences are utterly obstructive of a rational investigation of any fundamental religious dogma, and the true investigator is to be deemed fortunate who can command a hearing at all, and secure even tolerable charity for his motives. To complain of this, however, is to complain of Nature herself. Religious jealousy and bigotry are everywhere, and increase with the progressive growth of Religion until it reaches its rationalistic stage. The traveller who comes to the windward of a fetich or has trodden on the toe of an idol or peeped in upon the secret orgies of their worshippers, finds himself suddenly surrounded by infuriated savages, who menace him with imminent death. The Brahmin ranks high as a Thinker, yet the shabbiest beggar of the Caste would consider himself defiled to be even touched by a Marcus Aurelian or St. Peter, or by eating food cooked by his English Empress, Victoria. The most enlightened nation of antiquity sacrificed their Socrates for sacrilege or infidelity to their trumpery and immoral Gods. Imagine, also, if you can, the illimitable fury which would be aroused in the black-browed Imams and white-bearded Soufis of Islam, were some Christian to penetrate to the presence of the "sacred stone" of Mecca and there dare to question its descent from Heaven, or to question the divine mission of the Prophet, or to assert the equality of the Son of

Mary with Allah himself! Would the "Latter-day-Saints" be less infuriated were a truculent Gentile to malign and denounce as a fraud their prophet Joseph? Or the burly priests at Rome at having the immaculate conception of Mary or the divinity of Jesus questioned?

The truth is that man's superstitions and supernatural creeds everywhere spurn the abitrament of reason, and their believers, both openly and secretly, despise investigation, and persecute the free and fearless investigator. The Theology of Supernaturalism is everywhere sleeplessly jealous, intolerant and vindictive. Men may consent to be contradicted or even to be convinced of their ignorance or errors regarding matters which they *can* know, but they become spitefully deaf when you would expose the errors of their crude notions of the unknown or unknowable. They may listen to you upon the most important earthly affairs, but dare to touch their absurdest and most impossible dreams of the Invisible World and they will cling to them with a blind obstinacy proportioned to their irrationality. Your reason becomes the antagonist of their desires, of which their notions are a reflex. The very indefensibility of their crude conceptions makes them spiteful as hornets. Scores of heaven-born, but antagonistic and conflicting, creeds are thus obstinately held as sacred and inviolable by the Human Race. Men require strict legal proof of the slightest claim to property, and demand proof "beyond all rational doubt" to establish a theft or a burglary, while absolutely rejecting all unsworn and all hearsay testimony; and yet they will believe in the suspension and reversal of those laws of nature

upon whose stability and inflexible reliability all truth and confidence must rest, or in the birth of the Infinite God from a mere woman in the ordinary course of embryonic development or gestation, upon the bare assertions of ancient, unverified, conflicting and disputed writings, either invented or compiled from hearsays and traditions floating among ignorant and superstitious people; and will promptly stake their salvation upon unauthenticated and unverified evidence, which, if fully authenticated as genuine, they would as promptly reject as worthless in a trial for a debt of five dollars. Men not only lock in their superstitions and sacred creeds, but would forever bury the key; and he who would venture to inspect the mouldy contents of these sealed vaults consecrated to Superstition, is treated as a blasphemer and a desecrator of holy things.

When a people have their faith embodied in "sacred books," the task of exposing religious errors becomes greatly more difficult. Christianity has felt the force of this difficulty. Outside of the Roman Empire in which it originated, it has never been enabled to convert a people having such sacred records. Such religionists, like the Christians, refer every questioner to their own sacred books as final and infallible. Once bastioned with these infallible and bomb-proof supernatural records, Superstition may "laugh a seige to scorn." Everything is proven by "The Book," and the book proves itself—in itself implies verity!

No religion, save the faith of Islam, places so supreme a value upon faith—sheer unreasoning faith—as does Christianity; and none hurls such frightful hell-penalties at the head of even the honest doubter and skeptic. Each of these Semitic religions offers, also, the most divine rewards for absolute, childish trust and credence. And yet, each regards this demand for unquestioning faith by the other as a piece of most intolerable audacity and consummate presumption,—and denounces it as the bold effrontery of imposture. Each is more intolerant of the presumption and superstitious credulity of the other, than is the skeptic. The only just apologist of each to the other is the common disbeliever of the supernatural pretensions of both.

How few of us, indeed, are willing or even capable of applying the same rules of evidence and the same measure of justice to our own religious creeds which we apply to those of all others? Even those who suppose that they have thrown off the yoke of Supernaturalism are often unconsciously controlled by its dogmas and influences; while there are, perhaps, none who do not still retain old notions which are unsupported by evidence or reason, and which are out of harmony with, and unadjusted to, their reformed rationalistic views. Our last errors to receive correction are those pertaining to Theology. And yet, Why should we refuse or hesitate to investigate and reform our religious, any more than scientific or historic, beliefs? Can any subject be more worthy of our utmost rational endeavors? Why are we, or at least Why need we be, so timid about this matter? Surely, the facts themselves cannot be *altered*

by our mental conclusions about them ; nor could God require more than our best and highest endeavors by that reason which is, not only our highest, but sole arbiter of truth. Our irrational assumption of the facts or our belief in them cannot make them exist. Fact and Truth reign in eternal accord with true Reason, without regard to human faith or belief. Our duty manifestly is, not to endeavor to supply the facts or to substitute our beliefs or desires for them, but to conform our beliefs to the real and existing facts by the highest means and methods possible to us. If our data are insufficient or imperfect,—increase or improve them. If our reason is inadequate,—cultivate and develop it. If our desires are adverse and obstructive,—subordinate them to, and co-ordinate them with, the divine facts and purposes of Being, as they are manifested in its universal evolutions. The fact that scenes and events occurred in the remote past and lie buried amid the undistinguishable rubbish of decayed centuries may put them beyond the pale of knowledge, but not outside the jurisdiction of Reason. Ought the very facts and considerations which make them rationally incredible or unreclaimable, to also secure their sanctity and infallibility? Ought not the illy-comprehended theological assumptions and religious notions of the early, myth-forming ages and the zealous and interested assertions of priests and propagandists, to be treated at least as scrutinizingly as all others? Does not all human history and experience painfully demonstrate the absolute necessity of treating such evidences with extraordinary precautions against fraud, error and imposition rather than with blind credulity? If these alleged “divine truths” are real divine truths, intended

by God for man's belief,—Ought they not to stand any amount of investigation?—nay, more, Should they not *court all tests* and *defy all scrutiny*? Would God put the salvation or damnation of the whole Human Race, for all eternity, upon evidence wholly incomprehensible or inconclusive, or less rationally satisfying than that required to prove the most ordinary facts? Would He offer salvation or damnation upon the alternative of a belief requiring a credulity which would leave us at the mercy of every cunning impostor and compel us to accept every antideluvian notion and superstition? If God really holds us responsible for our beliefs—Would he not rather hold us guilty for a hasty, inconsiderate acceptance of unproved and irrational beliefs—for not earnestly using the reason and means that he has given us, than for errors in rejecting that which our highest intelligence forbade us to believe? Men tremble at the bare idea of denying that a young carpenter, who was executed some 2000 years ago, was God;—Do they ever pause to think of the very Belshazzar-trembling that may seize upon them when (in their own language) they “face the Infinite God,” and are asked how they have dared to place a mere man upon the throne of the Infinite and identify him with God! If they think that God damns men for blasphemy and false opinions,—May it not be as well to hear God's side, also, before awarding His very being and throne to a mere human claimant—(if he ever *did* claim it)? Is there not, from their own stand-point of responsibility, another and very appalling side to this question?

If what has been said shall tend, in any degree, to render the views to be taken less startling by reason of their conflict with our hereditary notions, and to induce the reader to at least *endeavor* to actually use his everyday-reason and common sense about the witnesses, evidences, methods and conclusions touching his own religion and its records, in the same manner he would about those of other religions or as if the alleged events and sayings were *now happening* or being narrated under similar and equivalent conditions, then our chief object and highest hope has been achieved. And let it be remembered, that the very first step towards divesting ourselves of irrational partialities in this matter, is to fully realize and appreciate the fact that we must no longer indulge in that old, childish method of "reasoning in a circle"—that method to which we have been so long accustomed to listen with approval, or at least without objection—that method by which Christianity and its Bible are accepted as divinely endorsed, and are permitted to prove their infallibility by their divine origin or inspiration, and then prove their divine origin and inspiration by their own already-established and infallible authority. The sayings and narratives in the Bible must be accepted for what they are worth as human testimony, and not for a penny-worth more, in all discussions where its infallibility is not conceded. Our being taught to *regard* it as inspired has not the slightest tendency to *make* it so. Nor are the assertions of the Jews that they are the special and favored people of God of any more value than the self-asserted superiority of the Brahmin or of the pig-tailed citizen of the "Celestial Empire;" nor are their notions of, or claims to, divine

inspiration, deserving of higher consideration than those of Islam or other religions. In a rational point of view, Christianity presents its claims for acceptance or rejection now, as it did in the beginning ; and must legitimately and affirmatively establish the facts it asserts and its entire claims to divine authority by the full amounts, kinds and rules of evidence demanded by human reason and experience. In thus divesting ourselves of the assumptions and infallibility of the Church and its Bible, indeed, we are but divesting ancient writings of a sanctity and infallible authority conferred on them solely by subsequent ages ; for none of the books we shall rely upon, and, with slight exceptions, none others, make any *claim* to having been written by special divine inspiration ; nor were the books composing the New Testament regarded as part of the " Sacred Scriptures " either by their own authors or by the men of their time. But, while demanding the benefit of these truths and insisting that the burden of proof is upon the Church which asserts the facts in issue, it will be found, that we do not practically avail ourselves of these advantages, but really take the burden of negating the Scriptural conclusions discussed, by the facts as substantially narrated in the Gospels.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROMULGATORS OF THE EVIDENCE.

It would be with little propriety that we could approach the discussion of such a subject as the resurrection of Jesus without first endeavoring to comprehend the nature and value of the materials with which we shall be compelled to deal. Characters, opinions and actions so remote from us in time, space, race, development, conditions and intelligence, cannot be correctly judged from our own status and stand-point. We must endeavor, therefore, however imperfectly, to recover and realize both the personal and impersonal facts influencing the main fact to be investigated and the evidence upon which its decision depends. Let us endeavor to at least approximately comprehend the characters and the mental and social status of the chief actors and witnesses and the motives influencing them, as well as the authenticity and value of the written testimony concerning them, and the public conditions and persons who influenced the final event. In short, Let us endeavor to bring ourselves into *rapport* with those early times and actors that we may appreciate their views, actions and testimony. And first, Let us endeavor to form some

notion of the value of the record of the evidence and some conception of the persons who furnished that evidence.

Accustomed to witness the imperial power and splendor of the triumphant Christian Church, it is wellnigh impossible to realize the true status and condition of its founders—to realize the rude appearance and habits and the lowly simplicity and profound ignorance of the little crowd of men and women who followed Jesus and bore witness to his works and sayings. They are no longer, to us, what Fact or even the Scripture makes them, but are beings wholly idealized by Time and Art. Whether any of the original Twelve could write is uncertain. If any it was Matthew, the Publican. The occupation and condition of the others would, in that age and country, forbid us to credit them with an accomplishment then so unusual, even had their ignorance and illiteracy not been used to verify their pretensions to supernatural aid, in the Scriptures themselves. But Jesus and his disciples were said to be wholly illiterate, as we find in the Gospels. With the exception of Matthew, who held the odious position of Publican, they all seem to have been simple fishermen—neither above or below the average of their class, save perhaps in morality, and certainly in credulity:—a class noted, the world over, for simple ignorance and unbounded credulity and superstition.

The young carpenter of Nazareth seems to have

confined his selections, with the exception of Judas, to the Tetrarchy of Galilee, and almost exclusively to the simple fisherman-class. In no instance did he select or endeavor to procure one of education and standing in society, nor any one from the mercantile or agricultural classes, or even from his own mechanic class

Mr. Beecher, in his *Life of Christ*, says:—"It is impossible, from the materials at our command, to ascertain upon what principles of selection the disciples were gathered. But few of them asserted any such individuality as to bring their names into view during the ministry of Jesus. * * They were all selected from the common walks of life. None of them gave evidence of peculiar depth of religious feeling. None of them except John ever exhibited any traits. That they were subject to the common faults of humanity abundantly appears in their disputes among themselves, in their worldly ambitions, in their plotting to supersede each other, in their rash and revengeful imprecations of judgments upon the villagers who had treated Jesus with disrespect, and in their utter lack of courage when the final catastrophe was approaching. They believed in an earthly kingdom for the Messiah, and, with the rest of their people, anticipated a carnal triumph of Jesus over all his enemies. They could not be made believe that their master was to be put to death; and when he was arrested, they—'all forsook him and fled.' They hovered in bewilderment around the solemn tragedy, but one of them, John, had the courage to be present and near at the crucifixion of their Teacher. Looking externally upon these men, contrasting them with such as Nico-

demus and Joseph of Arimathea, the question arises, whether among all the more highly cultivated Jews, among Pharisees and Doctors, there might not have been found sincere men, of deeply religious natures, of educated intelligence, who, under the same amount of personal instruction, would have been far more capable of carrying forward the work of the New Kingdom. All that can be known is, that Jesus chose his disciples from Galilee, far away from the Temple influence and in a province much affected with the foreign spirit; that he selected them, not from the specifically religious class, but from the working people. None are mentioned as from agricultural pursuits, and all whose occupations are mentioned were more or less concerned with commerce. That there were reasons in his own mind for the selection none can doubt, and none can ever know what the reasons were."

Mr. Beecher is right: none can ever *know* what his reasons were, but it is equally impossible for the rational and unbiased mind to fail to perceive that there is a *violent presumption* as to the nature of his reasons and motives for selecting such men as Mr. Beecher describes for the purposes for which he actually used them. Mr. Beecher not only leads us directly up to the qualities for which they were actually chosen, but renders the true conclusion resistless by negating all others. The chosen disciples, even according to Mr. Beecher, had neither the conduct, nor the courage to fight. They had neither wealth, position nor influence to offer to the cause. They had not sufficient education or intelligence to convince the Wise, or to sway the public. They had not

the capacity even to imitate the "marvellous works" of their master, to any valuable extent. In the presence of Jesus they said little, and did less. They made but few efforts even in his absence, but with the most discouraging results. The great majority of them are never brought into notice, at all, during his public career, and were left to sink into oblivion after it ;—being mere dummies before the resurrection and equally so after it. He selected twelve, not because that special number were required for witnesses, but as representatives of the "twelve tribes :"—he really used and trusted but three. None of them ever performed a valuable service or met with a single success during his ministry or trial, nor gave the slightest evidence of capacity for aiding such an enterprise. He in fact rebuked even the slightest indications of their possessing independent opinions. Absolute faith, devotion and obedience was what was demanded of them, and these they accorded him. They had, Mr. Beecher tells us, nothing to specially commend them either in their moral or religious natures or conduct. None, he says, ever exhibited a trait of genius save John ; and we confess that we have not been enabled to see the justice of the exception or the propriety of, in any manner, connecting the exalted word, genius, with the name of John. But, Mr. Beecher is right : there must have been *some* motive governing their selection :—What was it ? Mr. Beecher says "none can ever know." Now, what he himself *shows* to be his real difficulty is, not that there are no sufficient means of knowing, but that, from his own view of Jesus and his mission, it is impossible for him to *conceive* the motive for such a selection. He is evidently impressed with

the idea that the selections could have been improved in the mode he suggests—an exactly *opposite* mode to the one actually adopted. If it had been Mahomet who had so acted instead of Jesus, Mr. Beecher would have found no difficulty in assigning the true inducement and motive for the selection. He fails to find in the men selected a single special qualification required by his own view of the purposes for which they were selected, because they had none; while they clearly seem to him to have had many and glaring disqualifications. The only qualities which specially distinguished them, and were also peculiar to all of them, point with unerring certainty to the real motive—a motive which Mr. Beecher dare not know, and could even hint of his divine Master. Had Mr. Beecher, however, found Mahomet or any other aspirant for the honor of founding a new kingdom or a new Religion, by the means of thaumaturgic or miraculous exhibitions to secure a belief in his divine mission by the ignorant and superstitious multitude, choosing for his constant personal followers and assistants men from the humblest, most ignorant and most superstitious and credulous class, who exhibited no special traits or capacity, save an exceptional credulity even among their exceptionally credulous class—an unfailing aptitude for believing without doubt or criticism whatever they were desired to believe, as well as for doing whatever they were told to do, and roundly testifying to, and freely publishing their own superstitious and credulous beliefs and conclusions as actual facts, and who could be spurred on illimitably by their childish vanity and desire to be set in high places and on the “right hand of power,”—and who had no *other* qualifications either useful or or-

namental ; and had he also found that their Master knew of this lack of higher qualifications and still retained them as his exclusive assistants, and used them for the special qualities they did possess, — Would Mr. Beecher have had any hesitation in saying—“ Mahomet evidently chose these men expressly for *assistants and witnesses* in his miracle-working, and for that purpose chose with sagacity : their ignorance, superstition, credulity and implicit trust and obedience admirably qualified them for ‘ scene shifters ’ and witnesses to aid and give currency to the thaumaturgic feats of their master ? ” This would be his first and inevitable conclusion. But when we strike out the name, Mahomet, and insert that of Jesus, the mind of Mr. Beecher flies as wild as a magnetic needle when a loadstone is waved over it. He is bewildered. He looks dazedly around in search of a motive for such a course in Jesus—in Jesus the God :—no, there is no conceivable motive possible to a God anywhere to be found. “ There *must* have been *some* principle of selection, but it can never be known,” sighs the venerable servant at the altar of Jesus : he dare not even think of the motive which would be glaringly palpable in the case of another, in connection with his Divine Master ! Mr. Beecher cannot review the facts, however, without being impelled to *query* whether a higher and more suitable selection might not have been made—whether such men as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea would not have done better. Here, as before, if the Koran instead of the Bible had furnished us the facts, Mr. Beecher would have had no difficulty :—he would have perceived that Jesus *positively avoided* having the intelligent classes as his personal followers and as witnesses of his wonder-

working, and that it was quite impossible for such men to have followed, served and testified for him as did the ignorant and credulous fishermen of Galilee ; however much they might have sympathized with his humane and democratic principles, and his ardent hopes for the speedy "redemption of Israel."

Jesus did not fail in his essential purpose in the choice of his personal followers,—Judas excepted. He was, indeed, specially sagacious in reading both the characters and intentions of men. He chose his attendant disciples for witnesses to his "wonderful works," and *as* "chosen witnesses" they proved themselves admirable and unfailing in their unquestioning faith and in the positive and unqualified nature of their testimony. When their master and expected king seemed utterly abandoned by all others their faith, their credulity, their willing obedience, and their hopes of being his highest officials and kingly favorites, when his miracles should have won him a throne, never deserted them for a moment until their hopes and confidence were alike blasted by his final arrest. If they failed in all things which required intelligence or skill, it was because the necessary qualities which fitted them for miracle-proving rendered them *unfit for higher duties*. Jesus unavailingly tried to use them for other purposes, but yielded at once and with scarce a murmur when they failed ; as if he were conscious that they ought not have been expected to succeed by qualities directly opposite to those for which they were chosen. They at least demonstrated

by their whole conduct both the motive for their selection and the sagacity of the choice. They followed him with ready credulity upon his very first offer, or summons, and continued to follow him with an all-accepting faith and hopeful devotion to the last. This was the kind of followers Jesus loved and demanded. For while he was especially fond of cross-questioning and confounding others, he brooked no question of his own claims, and became harshly vituperative to opponents and doubters, when his own powers or performances were questioned.

Besides this chosen band of attendant witnesses, there would seem to have been a number of women who frequently, if not ordinarily, followed them in their peregrinations. Perhaps there are only two of these women upon whose character the Gospels throw any light. We find the mother of James and John an active participant in the contentions for the anticipated positions and offices under King Jesus, among the chosen twelve, and demanding of Jesus that the two highest places—those on the right and left hand of his throne—should be given to her sons. The other—Mary Magdalen—is claimed to have been a woman of “easy virtue,” out of whom seven devils had been cast. Her personal attachment and devotion seems to have been very decided: It is not difficult to conceive such women, or to comprehend the kind of women who would constitute such a following. They would not probably be less credulous, superstitious, ignorant or interested, nor less efficient in spreading accounts of the miracles of their master, than were their male companions.

Such were the chosen witnesses and other immediate followers upon whose testimony, at the best, we are compelled to depend for our belief in numberless miraculous suspensions of the laws of Nature, and for our Knowledge of the salvation of the World. It was they who gave testimony and currency to the facts and stories which, in more or less mutilated and modified forms, entered into, and constituted the frame-work of, the gospel narratives and the early Christian legends and traditions. If we are not wholly untrue to ourselves—if we do not wholly suppress our reason and common sense, we shall be at little loss in estimating the value of such testimony,—especially as to the suspension of the Laws of Nature, of whose very existence they had never even dreamed.

That Jesus took the very best possible modes and instruments to have his miracles *attested* and *circulated*, is not to be contested. That he also took, however, the very *worst ones* to have them *believed by rational and intelligent minds*, is not only manifest to such rational minds, but is proved by their actual and almost universal rejection by the intelligent men who knew both him and his witnesses, and who were even feverishly anxious to hail him as Messiah and King had he satisfied them of his powers and pretensions. One grand imposing and indubitable miracle, performed as an express test before the assembled priests, the Sanhedrim and the multitude in the Jewish Temple, would have done the work—would have opened the hearts and arms of every Jew from the Thames to the Ganges.

But we have not been permitted to have even the guaranty of these original promulgators of the "Story of Jesus." It is only the disturbed and distorted echoes of their disjointed and discordant rumors which now reach us through our present copies and translations of the Gospels. Even as they now stand those Gospels neither constitute, nor purport to be, a history of either Jesus or of his teachings. We have only what purports to be fragmentary and disjointed accounts of his acts and sayings during brief periods of his life, written without order or chronological sequence ; while even these fragments of his conversations and doings are not only of unknown and contested authorship, but have unquestionably suffered from interpolations, alterations, miscopyings and mistranslations.

It was not upon the New Testament writings that the Church was founded, for they were written for the already existing churches, or individual Christians, long after they were established ; while the New Testament canon was not established until centuries after the crucifixion. Christ never left a syllable in writing, nor did he ever instruct others to write. His own efforts were verbal, and his sole instructions were to "*preach* his gospel." It was upon the verbal statements of the Apostles, and those whom they instructed, that the churches were founded ; and for more than a century the Church was governed by oral declarations and traditions almost exclusively.

The multitude of absurd, childish and conflicting stories which spring from, or were attached to, the name of Jesus after his supposed resurrection, would scarcely be credible, in our day, to those who are unfamiliar with the history of similar religions and with the myth and legend-making proclivities of peoples,—especially during the earlier phases of their development. We find that they spontaneously, as it were, sprung up, like wild weeds, around the name of Jesus, or were adopted and attached to it from older myths and legends ; and quite as freely as in the case of all other founders of religions or other famous wonder-workers. During the plastic period of the first ages of Christianity her legend-factories and myth-furnaces were kept, if possible, more busy than those of the Mahometans and Buddhists, and with no less prolific and grotesque results.

Before the end of the second century vast numbers of these disjointed, marvellous and childish narratives grew into something like continuous myths, legends and stories, and were then partially reduced to writing under various pretences, and became known under distinct names. Great numbers of Gospels, and still greater numbers of epistles—(most of which were claimed to have been written by, and bore the name of, some of the apostles or early disciples,) were set afloat upon the great tide of popular beliefs. Whether an epistle or book was genuine or a forgery was little inquired into, and its authenticity and authority were asserted or denied rather with reference to its effect upon the existing doctrines

and beliefs of the speaker than from any special knowledge or care as to the real facts. Many of the Gospels current in those early days were by no means so reticent upon the early history of Jesus and his mother as are those whose mutilated remains have come down to us. The same ignorant and superstitious spirit which had thrown the halo of the Marvellous and Divine about his later life, did not fail to illuminate his infancy and boyhood with equally glaring stage-lights. They narrated, with equal dogmatic simplicity, the miracles which adorned those early years of his life as they did those of his manhood. They gravely tell us that his very swaddling-clothes, or baby-linen, like some divine fetich, unconsciously performed some most wonderful miracles; that the mud-birds which he formed when a boy at play so far outstripped those of his play-fellows as to take to wings and fly; that while he was working at his trade under his father, Joseph received an order from the King of Jerusalem to make him a throne, and that after working upon it for two years, and setting it into its place, it was found to be decidedly too small to fill the space it was to occupy,—greatly to the alarm of the old carpenter;—but that Jesus bade him to be comforted, and to take hold of one side of the throne and pull, while he himself pulled at the other side; and that, upon doing so, the throne obeyed and was stretched to the proper dimensions; and, also, that Jesus had actually spoken in his cradle and declared himself the “Son of God,” and other like wonderful things; all of which are now kept carefully out of sight. There was also the “Gospel of Mary,” in which the mother figures almost as miraculously as her son.

In fact the number and extent of the forgeries, alterations and interpolations, and of the sheer inventions, myths and lies became so great during the first few centuries of the Christian era that all definite conception of the life and sayings of Jesus become impossible ; and the Church was rent by many conflicting doctrines and schisms. These various and variously mutilated gospels and epistles were severally held by different churches and individuals in Asia, Africa and Europe, and were received with various degrees of credit or incredulity by those who possessed them or copies of them ;—each judging for themselves without ecclesiastical or conscientious restraint.

As there was neither paper nor printing in those days the whole of these documents were in manuscript, written upon the fragile papyrus. Under the conditions of travel and intercourse among the early churches it took a long time for these successive productions to find their way, in the form of copies, to all the churches, and still longer for the churches to form and interchange their various and conflicting opinions about their genuineness and value. Nor was the necessity for a common understanding of them then deemed of so much importance as it would now, since, among other reasons, they still used and chiefly relied upon the oral traditions, and were in constant expectation of the second coming of Jesus himself, and had never been taught to expect any inspired or uninspired writings concerning him, nor to have any special or exclusive reverence for such as had been written. And when the oral traditions grew more doubtful and controverted, the Church writings

were only used in common with, and in aid of, the traditions.

As the conflicts increased with regard to traditions and doctrines, the favorite gospels and epistles gained a more marked and exclusive ascendancy over the whole or certain churches. But it is never to be overlooked that, during those first ages, the only "sacred scriptures" known or recognized among Christians was the old Jewish Scriptures. No one, during the age of the Apostles, dreamed of calling the pastoral or personal letters of Paul, or a narrative by Matthew, by the sacred name,—*"Scripture ;"*—and certainly the Apostles and writers themselves never claimed them to rank as such. Those early writings, whether now considered canonical or uncanonical, were generally called forth by special circumstances, and were most of them written for the special benefit of certain races, churches or individuals, or to affect some opinions or controversies among them ; and were, upon their face, generally directed to those for whom they were intended. The special object of those not so directed is very generally known and conceded. The Gospel, so-called, of Matthew was written for the special benefit of the Jews ; that of Mark more especially for the Gentiles ; Luke's, expressly for one Theophilus, with a view to enlighten him as to those things which were "most surely believed" among the Christians ; John's Gospel, for the purpose of affecting certain controverted doctrines ; mainly, it would seem, to establish the physical nature and sufferings of Jesus and his eternal sonship and oneness with the Father ; while the epistles themselves show to whom, and for what, they

were written, being mere pastoral or friendly letters to churches or individuals, and were neither considered nor treated as specially inspired or infallible by the writers or receivers. For centuries the books now received as canonical stood side-by-side with those which are now denounced as apocryphal, and indiscriminately shared with them the confidence of the various churches ;—all, however, in different and varying degrees, according to the inclinations and views of their readers. Some of the apocryphal books were long credited and quoted, while some of our canonical ones were equally long discredited. Much, indeed, of our own supposed knowledge of scriptural characters comes from those discarded books. Where there were differences in the credit awarded to those early writings, they were differences in *degree* and not in *kind*. It was not because one was deemed *inspired*, and another *not* ; but only such differences in confidence as Methodists might now have between the conflicting opinions and writings of Mr. Wesley and Lorenzo Dow, or Whitefield.

It was only in after centuries that it was thought necessary to form a select and authoritative canon of the New Testament, nor did the rejected books ever cease to be regarded as valuable and trustworthy sources of information by the great mother Church of Rome ; while the founder of Protestantism went so far as to reject some half dozen of the books now in our canon. To accept the authorities respected by ancient Christians would be deemed heretical by present Orthodoxy ; to deny the inspiration of those rejected by Luther would damn us as infidels.

To those who look upon this selected lot of books or writings as the "Word of Life," and who would deem an autograph of one of the apostles of incalculable value, it would seem not a little strange that the early Christians made no effort to transmit to posterity the original, or, at least, an indubitable copy of this priceless treasure. Had their opinions and means been those of our orthodox Christians they would doubtless have done so, or were the writings of such divine origin and actual value as they are deemed to be, they would undoubtedly have been *inspired* to do so by the Divine Inspirer of the books. There are several reasons for this singular neglect. Firstly: there was the wholly inferior regard for both the originals and their authors which the early Christians possessed, as is shown even by the books themselves. On this subject, Smith's Bible Dictionary says,—“The original copies soon perished. * * It is certainly remarkable that in controversies, at the close of the second century, which often turned upon disputed readings of Scripture, no appeals were made to the apostolic originals. * * The practice of verbal quotations from the New Testament was not prevalent. * * The evangelical citations in the Apostolic Fathers and Justin Martin show that the oral tradition was still as widely current as the written Gospels, and there is not in those writers *one express citation* from the other Apostolic books. * * On all accounts it seems reasonable to conclude that the autographs perished during that solemn pause which followed the Apostolic Age *in which the idea of a Christian canon* parallel with and supplementary to the Jewish canon *was first distinctly realized.*” This is a very manifest reason why, prior to this idea of

supplementary canon, Christians were careless of preserving those early writings. They were not *then* regarded *inspired Scripture* as they are *now*.

Secondly: The men who familiarly knew and heard the Apostles themselves—who were conversant with their ideas, tempers and human frailties—who saw them differ, wrangle and angrily disagree, not only on personal matters, but on church doctrines—who saw the “*Apostle of the Gentiles*” flatly refusing to be accompanied by the “*Evangelist of the Gentiles*,” and, after an exciting controversy, separating in high dudgeon from Barnabas for insisting on his doing so—who saw the same doughty Apostle when he “withstood Peter to his face”—such men, we say, were not accustomed either to calling them Saints or of regarding them as infallible or inspired. Even Paul was constantly put upon his own defence, both personally and apostolically, in the different churches, as we see by his own epistles to them. The hallowing mists of nineteen centuries had not then, as now, illuminated their brows with the aureola of sanctity and of inspired infallibility.

Thirdly: During those first ages the belief in the imminent reappearance of Jesus in his glory, and of the destruction of the World was universal, and all Christians stood in constant expectation of this “second advent” and final mundane catastrophe. This, Jesus himself had expressly taught them to expect and believe. It was no vague anticipation of the more visionary believers, based upon constructions of ancient, figurative and mystic prophecies, but a universal, undoubting faith,

based upon the recent plain and unequivocal assurances of Jesus himself. Jesus himself believed it. The Apostles who heard it from his own lips never for a moment doubted either his meaning or the certainty of the predicted and impending fact. Life had but two grand objects for them—to spread the “Gospel of the Kingdom,” and to “keep their garments unspotted,” and their “lights trimmed and burning” for the coming “bridegroom.” They had been assured by their Master that these stupendous events were approaching them “like a thief in the night ;”—that the world was tottering to its fall like a whitening harvest field ; and that, at any moment, but *certainly within the lifetime of that generation*, it would give place to a—“New Heaven and a new Earth.” So deeply rooted was the confidence in this express prediction of Jesus that, after the utmost limit for the natural life of that generation had long been passed, the faith refused to die with the fact, and the pious devotees wove for themselves a gossamer legend about the *miraculous prolongation* of the life of St. John, who had been the last survivor of the generation of Jesus. It was not until the final triumph of the Church under Constantine that the minds of Christians began to be diverted from this belief,—only, however, to suffer from spasmodic revivals of millennial expectancy from age to age ever since ;—our gravest divines being, even now, in special convention upon the question of the “second advent.” Why, then, should men in such hourly expectancy of the end of the world and of the presence of Jesus himself be expected to provide evidence about Jesus for future generations—generations which could never exist, or exist only in the presence of Jesus himself.

That Jesus himself was responsible, both for this belief in the imminence of this general destruction of the existing material universe, and for this Christian indifference to specific written evidence and to its future preservation, is certain—certain as the language of the New Testament can make it. He neither wrote a line, nor instructed others to write ; but confined his instructions exclusively to verbal preaching. He instructed his disciples to live in common, and to make no preparation for the future ; to “let every day provide for itself.” He taught them to “do quickly,” and be on constant guard, as the Night and End approached. He taught them that that generation was to see the last of the old world—that the destruction of Jerusalem was near at hand, and that the end of the World would immediately follow. Let any unbiased mind remember his general teaching, and then interpret his assertions on this latter point, to be found in the 24th chap. of Matthew and the 21st chap. of Luke, and he will find that it is impossible to construe his clearly expressed meaning in any other manner than it was understood by his apostles. If he did not so mean, then his disciples were not inspired to comprehend him, nor was he capable of making himself comprehensible. It will be found that his disciples came to him, when they had all retired from the city to the Mount of Olives, and soon after had been predicting the destruction of the Temple ; and asked him, privately, to—“tell them *when* these things should be.” But this alone would not satisfy them, since the fact of his teaching the destruction of the Temple would suggest to the Jewish mind the speedy consummation and end of all mundane affairs ; and they, therefore, asked him further—“*and*

what shall be the *sign of thy coming and of the end of the World.*" There is no uncertainty and ambiguity about this question. The two questions were separate, distinct and unmistakable. Jesus might have declined to answer, but he could not misunderstand it. He, in fact, neither affected to misunderstand them, nor declined to answer both their full questions in their palpable meaning *as put*. In doing this, it will be seen that he recites the troubles which shall precede these events, the dangers that shall menace themselves, the arising of pretenders and false prophets, the fact of his gospel being preached to all the world (as he had commanded them), and then warns them that should be in Judea that, when the "abomination of desolation" should "stand in the Holy Place," to flee to the mountains. He then predicts the coming woes and final fall of Jerusalem. That all this refers to the fall of Jerusalem and *completes the prophecy as to her*, is rendered still more manifest, if that were needed or possible, by the same declaration as it appears in Luke,—namely: that when they should "see Jerusalem compassed about with armies, then know that the *desolation thereof* is nigh." After having given this detailed and completed account of the destruction of Jerusalem, he goes on further to answer the remainder of their question as to his own second coming and the end of the world, and says—"immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken, and *then* shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; and *then* shall *all* the tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of

Heaven with Power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree : when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh : so likewise, when ye shall see all these things know that it is *nigh even at the doors*. Verily I say unto you *this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled*." He then solemnly declares that Heaven and Earth might pass away, but that these his words should not pass away ; but admits that he himself does not know the exact "day and hour" of their fulfilment. It was impossible for these Apostles to have put any other construction upon this language than they did, for it will bear no other—indeed clearly excludes all other. It is only after it has been so overwhelmingly demonstrated that the Prophet was mistaken, that men perforce content themselves to assume, in defiance of the resistless certainty of the language and intent, that the prophecy cannot mean what it says, *because* the Prophet *could not* have been so mistaken. All unbiased minds, however, must see, both from the plain terms of the prophecy and the preceding and subsequent declarations and beliefs, that Jesus meant, and his apostles understood him to mean, that his own second advent and the destruction of the world would happen during the *lifetime of that generation* and *immediately* after the fall of Jerusalem, and they were themselves to "see" and judge of the signs and fulfilment of the prophecy. This view is confirmed, also, by the reply of Jesus to Peter concerning the future end of John:—"If I will that he *tarry till I come*, what is

that to thee," which shows that he himself contemplated a return in that generation; nor did this suggestion of John's living till he come excite the surprise or inquiry upon the part of his disciples.

We have dwelt at some length upon these views of Jesus and his Apostles, touching the end of the World, by reason of their influence upon the nature of the evidence which they actually transmitted to the Future, as well as of their failure to transmit better evidence. If Jesus were what he is claimed to have been, he would have had the foresight and power to have furnished incontestible evidence of his life, labors and doctrines, and, as he made a belief in him a condition of salvation, it was his plain duty to have so ordered it as to have furnished to future generations the most reliable and perfect evidence of that which they were required to believe. And no, even human, founder of a religion would have shown so total and fatal a disregard of these things as did Jesus, unless he had also believed with Jesus that there would *be* no future generations to *need* them. No frank and fearless man will deny either that our sources of evidence in relation to the life and sayings of Jesus are lamentably defective, or will fail to perceive that Jesus himself, by the character of his selections of witnesses, and by his general conduct, instructions and teachings, was primarily and chiefly responsible for this deficiency and reliability of the proofs.

Having thus briefly considered the character of the witnesses and personal followers which Jesus selected—of the men and women who were the primary and chief promulgators of the facts and stories which formed the basis of the narratives in our New Testament and which engendered the myths and legends which were nurtured by primitive Christianity, Let us now glance at the origin, character, preservation and value of the new Canon of Scripture or—

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

We have seen that, during the primitive ages of Christianity, there was no New Testament Scriptures, nor any writing recognized as inspired or as Holy Scripture save the old Jewish Scriptures; that none were deemed necessary, and that the Apostles and their immediate successors recognized none such, nor ever suggested the adoption of any writings as such. We have seen, on the contrary, that whatever was written, said or reported by any Christian was taken into account as a common fund or source of information, and were severally regarded and graded by each Church and reader according to their own special

estimate of their genuineness and worth; and that the main dependence of the Church during a number of generations, was the oral teachings and traditions of the Church—a practice still maintained by the Mother Church of Rome. It was not until the hourly and all-absorbing expectancy of the second coming of Jesus and of the destruction of the World had grown less confident and intense—not until the written narratives and epistles had degenerated into a confused jumble, full of silly stories and conflicting testimony, preserved in unauthenticated and unreliable copies scattered through the Churches, and the oral traditions had become obscure and conflicting—not until near a hundred conflicting sects had sprung up in the bosom of the Church and were nurtured by food drawn from this chaos of conflicting testimony—not until different Churches and individuals were in angry feuds about both evidence and doctrines, and the warring sectaries were rending the very bowels of the Church, making the cities of the Empire scenes of carnage and assassination, and producing a reign of violence and crime which already threatened that demoralization and disruption of society which paved the way for the overthrow of ancient civilization and the initiation of the “Dark Ages”—not until the fanatical world-storming was over and a Christian Emperor sat upon the throne of the Cæsars witnessing triumphant Christianity rend itself, and deploring the disgraceful puerility of narratives and the uncertainty and discord of the evidences and doctrines of the Church which he had found it his interest to adopt—not until the fourth century after the birth of Jesus and after all these things had come to

pass, was it resolved, *through political authority*, to secure some more definite announcement of church doctrines; nor was it until near the beginning of the fifth century that the Canon of the New Testament was decreed and established by a majority vote of the Council of Carthage.

Even under the most favorable light this vote at the Council of Carthage was a singular and questionable affair. A strange scene to rational men that—of several hundred disputing and angry controversialists, belonging to a superstitious, factious and corrupt age, meeting together amidst intrigue, excitement and even danger, to *decide by a majority vote* which should be or was, and what was not or should not be, the “Word of God,” and to give an authoritative and final religion to the World—to fix the boundaries of human belief, to be guarded by persecution here, and eternal torments hereafter! But when we honestly and fearlessly reflect upon the character and situation of the men who thus attempted to finally decide these momentous questions, involving God and man, time and eternity—when we reflect, further, that persons and incidents about whom, and whose evidence, they were to decide had been in their graves for hundreds of years, that no original evidence whatever had ever reached them, nor perhaps even a copy-of-a-copy of any one of the many conflicting narratives or epistles of the First Age, that they knew that it had been boldly charged and counter-charged that original writings, even

such as there had been, had been grossly and intentionally tampered with, as well as often changed to compel a greater correspondence between them or to suit the peculiar views and doctrines of the warring Churches and sectaries—when we reflect, still further, how incompetent, unworthy and even infamous were many of the Councils of those early times, how impossible it was for the Council of Carthage to secure the means of correcting errors or of establishing the real truths and facts which they decided upon—when we reflect upon all this, and more, we cannot but wonder at the audacity of the men who dared to assume such authority and responsibility—or rather *should* wonder, if we did not know that nothing could be deemed audacious or presumptuous in the priesthood of a supernatural religion when dealing with the superstitions of the people.

It is so important to understand the men who, by a majority vote like a parliament or political caucus, decided for us what was the Word of God, that I beg to quote from Lecky's History of European Morals (commencing page 206, vol. 2,) the following language "According to the popular belief, all who differed from the teaching of the orthodox lived under the hatred of the Almighty, and were destined after death for an eternity of anguish. Very naturally, therefore, they were wholly alienated from the true believers, and no moral or intellectual excellence could atone for their crime in propagating error. The eighty or ninety sects into which Christianity speedily divided, hated one another with an intensity that extorted the wonder of Julian and the ridicule of the Pagans of Alexandria, and the fierce riots

and persecutions that hatred produced appear in every page of Ecclesiastical history. There is, indeed, something at once grotesque and ghastly in the spectacle. The Donatists, having separated from the Orthodox simply on the question of the validity of the consecration of a certain Bishop, declared that all who accepted the Orthodox view must be damned, refused to perform their rites in the orthodox churches which they had seized, till they had burnt the altar and scraped the wood, beat multitudes to death with clubs, blinded others by anointing their eyes with lime, filled Africa, during near two centuries, with war and desolation, and contributed largely to its final ruin. The childish and almost unintelligible quarrels between the Homoiousians and the Homousians, between those who maintained that the nature of Christ was like that of the Father and those who maintained that it was the same, filled the world with riot and hatred. The Catholics tell how an Arian Emperor caused eighty orthodox priests to be drowned on a single occasion; how three thousand persons perished in the riots that convulsed Constantinople when the Arian Bishop Macedonius superseded the Athenasian Paul; how George of Cappadocia, the Arian Bishop of Alexandria caused the widows of the Athenasian party to be scourged on the soles of their feet, the holy virgins to be stripped naked, to be flogged with prickly branches of palm trees, or to be slowly scorched over fires till they abjured their creed.

“The triumph of the Catholics in Egypt was accompanied (if we may believe in the solemn assertions of eighty Adrian Bishops) by every variety of plunder,

murder, sacrilege and outrage. Arius himself was probably poisoned by Catholic hands. The followers of St. Cyril of Alexandria, who were chiefly monks, filled their city with riot and bloodshed, wounded the prefect Orestes, dragged the pure and gifted Hypatia into one of their churches, murdered her, tore the flesh from her bones with sharp shells, and, having stripped her body naked, plunged the mangled remains into the flames. In Ephesus, during the contest between St. Cyril and the Nestorians, the Cathedral itself was the theater of a fierce and bloody conflict. Constantinople, on the occasion of the deposition of St. Chrysostom, was for several days in a condition of absolute anarchy. After the Council of Chalcedon, Jerusalem and Alexandria were again convulsed, and the bishop of the latter city was murdered in his baptistry. About fifty years later, when the Monophysite Controversy was at its height, the palace of the Emperor at Constantinople was blockaded, the churches were besieged, and the streets commanded by furious bands of contending monks. Repressed for a time, the riots broke out two years after with an increased ferocity, and almost every leading city of the East was filled by the monks with bloodshed and with riots. St. Augustine himself is accused of having excited every kind of popular persecution against the semi-Pelagians. The Councils, animated by an almost frantic hatred, urged on by their anathemas the rival sects. In the 'Robber Council' of Ephesus, Flavinus, the bishop of Constantinople, was kicked and beaten by the bishop of Alexandria, or at least by his followers, and a few days later died from the effect of the blows. In the contested election that issued in the

election of St. Damascus as Pope of Rome, though no theological question appears to have been at issue, the riots were so fierce, that one hundred and thirty-seven corpses were found in one of the churches. The precedent of the Jewish persecutions of Idolatry having been already adduced by St. Cyprian, in the third century, in favor of excommunication, was urged by Optatus, in the reign of Constantine, in favor of persecuting the Donatists; in the next reign we find a large body of Christians presenting to the Emperor a petition based upon this precedent, imploring him to destroy by force the Pagan worship. About fifteen years later, the whole Christian Church was prepared, on the same grounds, to support the persecuting policy of St. Ambrose, the contending sects having found, in the duty of crushing religious liberty, the solitary tenet in which they were agreed. The most unaggressive and unobtrusive forms of Paganism were persecuted with the same ferocity. To offer a sacrifice was to commit a capital offence; to hang up a simple chaplet was to incur the forfeiture of an estate. The noblest works of Asiatic architecture and of Greek sculpture perished by the same iconoclasm that shattered the humble temple at which the peasant loved to pray, or the household gods which consecrated his home. There were no varieties of belief too minute for the new intolerance to embitter. The question of the proper time of celebrating Easter was believed to involve the issue of salvation or damnation; and when, long after, in the fourteenth century, the question of the nature of light at the transfiguration was discussed at Constantinople, those who refused to admit that that light was uncreated, were deprived of the honors of

Christian burial. Together with these legislative and ecclesiastical measures, a literature arose *surpassing* in its *mendacious ferocity* any other the world had ever known. The polemical writers habitually painted as demons those who diverged from Orthodox belief, gloated with vindictive piety over the sufferings of the heretic on earth, as upon a divine punishment, and sometimes, with almost superhuman malice, passing in imagination beyond the threshold of the grave, exulted in no ambiguous terms on the tortures which they believed to be reserved for him forever." Lecky continues in a citation from Julianus of Eclana by Dean Milman as follows:—"Nowhere is Christianity *less attractive* than in her *Councils of the Church*. * * * Intrigue, injustice, violence, decisions on *authority alone*, and that the authority of a *turbulent majority*. . . . detract from the reverence and impugn the judgments of at least the later Councils. The close is almost invariably a terrible anathema, in which it is impossible not to discern the tones of human hatred, of arrogant triumph, of rejoicing at the damnation imprecated against the humiliated adversary."

This pen-picture of the men and times who determined upon our Canon of the New Testament, and formulated and authoritatively settled the creed and rites of Christianity, involving the eternal fate of Humanity, by a *majority vote* and mere *self-asserted authority*, defies all comment or amendment. It would be difficult to em-

bellish it without descending to characteristics below the human. One can only stand in dumb wonder and humility when they remember that these were the ages of the "Saints,"—and their action largely the work of Saints themselves, and that the faith of all these long succeeding ages together with the blood and torture of untold millions of poor ignorant mortals and the faith in God and in "God's Word" and the life and death hopes of one third of the Human Race for nineteen centuries,—all have their source and authority in such a fountain! a fountain which was foul with all manner of ignorance, impurity, selfishness, hate, vindictiveness, cruelty and superstition, and which had already sapped the foundations of ancient civilization and was fast sinking into the depths of night and barbarism!—and that even yet the enlightened descendants of those suffering, degraded and degenerating generations still cling to the infallibility of the "majority votes" of these councils, and rest their hopes of salvation, and fears of damnation upon their passionate, turbulent and ignorant decisions!

The Canon of the New Testament once selected from the curious and discordant mass of Gospels and Epistles which had been accumulating and corrupting through the earlier centuries and still floating in unverified and unreliable copies through the churches, and once authoritatively determined by the majority of these "holy men" and "Sainted fathers," it would be taken for granted that those determining the matter, would at

least *now* save the posterity which they consigned to damnation for any refusal to accept their decrees, from the fatal causes of error and discord from which they themselves had suffered and had met to heal ;—that the Councils would at least have attempted to secure an imperishable text of their newly established “Scripture,” under the guidance of their *divinely inspired* wisdom, but in this all-important matter their divine inspiration failed them, and posterity was again left to renewed uncertainties. Multitudinous errors and mutilations, not only continued to be retained, but to be further multiplied and propagated as before. Under the title “New Testament” in Smith’s Bible Dictionary, we are told that :—“Two chief causes contributed specially to *corrupt* the texts of the Gospels, the attempts to *harmonize* parallel narratives, and the influence of Tradition. * *

The former assumed a special importance from the Diatessaron of Tatian (A. D. 170) and the latter, which was very great in the time of Justin Martyr, still lingered. * *

The tendency at Alexandria, or Carthage was in a certain direction, and *necessarily influenced* the character of the current text with accumulative force as far as it was unchecked by other influences. This is a *general law*, and the history of the Apostolic books is no exception to it. All experience shows that certain types of variation propagate and perpetuate themselves, and *existing documents prove* that it was so with the copies of the New Testament.” Yet, even these earlier mutilated and interpolated copies have not reached our time. The oldest manuscript copy of the New Testament now existing or known, is *supposed* to be the one found at Mount Sinai in A. D. 1859. Some have supposed

that this document dates back to the fourth century—a fact, however, which, if true, could give no possible assurance of its own reliability. Besides its many other variations from our editions and other ancient copies, it is found to contain two books which are unknown to our received Bible. Not one of the old manuscripts agrees with any other, and none of the oldest copies contain the complete record of the books as we have it.

With regard to the number and importance of the variations in the ancient manuscripts, the same article quoted, continues thus :—" Having surveyed in outline the history of the transmission of the written text, and the chief characteristics of the manuscripts in which it is preserved, we are in a position to consider the extent and nature of the variations which exist in different copies. It is impossible to estimate the number of these exactly, but they cannot be *less than* 120,000 (!) in all, though of these a very large proportion consist of differences of spelling and isolated abbreviations of scribes, and of the remainder comparatively few alterations are sufficiently well supported as to create reasonable doubt as to the final judgment. Probably there are not more than sixteen hundred to two thousand places in which the true reading is a matter of uncertainty (!) Various readings are due to different causes ; some arose from accidental, others from *intentional* alterations of the original text."

With no copy even claimed to be older than the fourth century, when the dust of ages had covered the remains of the eye-witnesses and mingled with the dust of their perished manuscripts, after all the various and repeated efforts to force the current and written accounts of the original facts and narratives into some kind of accord and consistency, and after all the admitted corruptions and errors, intentional and unintentional, preceding our oldest copies, with not a copy to refer to of a date claimed to be older than the fourth century—after all this, to be told that the old manuscripts now remaining, making a petty volume of the size of a common spelling book with less than 8000 small verses, containing our “Word of Life” and only hope of salvation, contain differences amounting to not less than 120,000—*nearly one for every word*, and that there is *only one* difference for every *four verses* which is of serious moment—only 1600 to 2000 in all, must be indeed consoling to those who can appreciate such divine care and providence and such inspired and infallible accuracy! To duller minds such facts are not assuring.

CHAPTER V.

THE WRITTEN GOSPELS, THEIR AUTHORS, AND THEIR
VALUE.

HAVING formed some estimate of the original promulgators of the "Gospel news" and of the men and times that selected and decided upon the books composing our New Testament Canon, as well as the degree of authenticity we should attach to it as a whole, it is also important that we should form some ideas about the authorship and reliability of the several accepted Gospels.

In attempting this, it is well to understand at once, that these Gospels, after having been subjected to all the manipulations and changes already shown, were selected, in their then form, in the fifth century after Jesus, from the large number of other Gospels which had, prior thereto, divided with them the confidence of Christians. It was possible for the Council to have adopted others, or to have rejected these. Let us understand, furthermore, that the members of that Council were unquestionably less critically informed upon the facts decided and far less competent to decide correctly

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than modern scholars. They themselves lived hundreds of years after the events narrated and really *knew* nothing about the authorship of the Gospels they selected. They had neither the critical capacity, nor adequate means, for a correct decision, and really decided upon their selection, not by reason of any real or supposed knowledge of the authorship of the selected works, or of their genuineness or correctness, but because the selected narratives suited them best. They both adopted Gospels written by unknown men, and, at best, purporting to be "according" to men who were not even Apostles, and rejected others which purported to be according to, or by, some of the Apostles themselves. We must also remember that the present titles of the Gospels are not the slightest evidence in *favor* of their having been written by the persons named in their present titles. The prefixing of these titles is conceded to have been done, not by their authors, but by subsequent and unauthorized parties who were by no means better informed on the matter than ourselves. Nor do these unauthorized titles pretend to show, even upon their face, who were the authors, nor do the narratives themselves purport to do so. Some persons, unknown, have written four narratives, now purporting, by subsequently prefixed titles, to be "according" to certain persons,—that is, according to the facts as held and related by them. If they had been written *by* these parties, why not have directly said so, since there could be no better evidence available than narratives directly written by Matthew and John? There could be no possible motive for failing to do so, nor would the Apostles have failed to have asserted their authorship in the works

themselves, to give them currency, had they really been their authors; and the very fact that they are only claimed to be Gospels "according" to the persons named, without saying who they were written *by*, implies that they were not written by them, and also that the real authors were unknown. It is not even claimed, now, that the author of either of the Gospels is known. At best, then, our evidence consists of the unsworn and unverified statements of unknown men, made long after the events recorded.

THE FIRST GOSPEL.

We have no knowledge of the authorship of our present Gospel styled "according to Matthew." It is not even probable that it was written by Matthew, the Publican. Of Matthew himself, almost nothing is known. After the crucifixion, his labors are assigned by the different traditions, to almost every country then known. There is no proof that he ever left Galilee, or took any part as an Evangelist, and the numerous and widely conflicting fields of labor assigned to him prove that nothing was really known concerning his after life by subsequent generations. During the whole period covered by the Gospel narratives he never appears,

either in action or speech. He is, to us, a *name*, and nothing more. With the exception of Peter, James and John, the original twelve seem to have been essentially supernumeraries, both before and after the crucifixion, and to have been retained chiefly as nominal and numerical representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel.

It is not improbable, though by no means certain, that Matthew could write; and that he actually did write, not a life or Gospel of Jesus, but certain discourses or remarkable sayings of Jesus—entitled “Memorables,” is probably true. It is reasonably certain that there was such a work under the name of Matthew, which may have been genuine; but it was the only one, and quite a different work from our first Gospel. The Galileans and Ebeonites, consisting of the original Jewish and Galilean disciples,—including the family relations of Jesus, seem to have had this book of “Memorables,” and to have claimed that they received it from Matthew himself. None of the early Fathers ever saw the original manuscript of any work by Matthew, although some of them confound our first Greek Gospel with this Hebrew “Memorables.” The first Gospel, so far as we can learn, was originally written in the Greek language, and is admitted to have many internal evidences that such was the fact. The supposition that our Greek Gospel is a translation of the Hebrew manuscript held by the Galileans, is unsupported by the evidence. Strauss says that,—“the fact is, no specification of that Evangelist (Matthew) can be found in the words of the Apostolic Fathers.”

As it is admitted that Matthew wrote his "Memorables" in Hebrew, while he was in Palestine, it is highly probable that the original Galilean disciples had, as they always claimed, the true work of Matthew, and that our first Greek Gospel was attributed to him, without warrant, by subsequent generations unacquainted with the facts. This view is clearly pointed to in the account of this Gospel in Smith's Bible Directory, which significantly drifts its observations towards such a conclusion, and seriously *queries* whether the Ebeonite Matthew was not the real "Memorables" or true work of that Apostle.

It has been urgently contended that this Gospel is a mere compilation;—the two first chapters about the infancy and genealogy of Jesus being added by the compiler. In confirmation of this view of the account of the "Nativity," it is asserted that the copies of at least a large number of Jewish Christians were known not to have these chapters at all. Christian authority suggests that the unknown date of this Gospel was probably between the years A. D. 50 and 60.

There is one consideration which should not be overlooked in this connection. The "Sermon on the Mount" is recorded in this first Gospel—a sermon making over a hundred verses. Now Matthew, even by the account of him in this very Gospel, was not called or even mentioned until after this sermon was delivered, nor is there the slightest indication or reason to believe that he was present, nor is it within the range of belief that a mere casual observer could have so specifically

remembered so long a discourse for a quarter of a century after it was delivered.

To say the very least of this matter, then, we have no reliable information as to who wrote our first Greek Gospel, but have reason to believe that it was *not Matthew*, the Apostle.

THE SECOND GOSPEL.

Our present narrative entitled "The Gospel according to St. Mark" has been supposed to have been written by that Marcus who was at one time with Paul, but was most indignantly rejected by the old Apostle. This, however, is a mere conjecture. And a still more gratuitous conjecture is, that he *might* have been one of the "Seventy:"—possibly, since, as we have no knowledge of who was, or was not, the author the range of mere conjecture—of the "might have been," is unrestricted. It has also been suggested that he was an interpreter of Peter, but this is also without support; while Papias says, that John the Presbyter was the interpreter of Peter, and Irenæus says the book was

written after the death of Peter. The truth is, that the person who wrote it, the time and place it was written, and the language in which it was written are alike unknown. Christian authority suggests A. D. 63 to 70 as its most probable date. Strauss says, that the Ecclesiastical writers supposed that certain allusions of Papias referred to the author of the Second Gospel, but he avers that, in fact, "the passage from Papias says nothing of it—nay it by no means agrees with that Gospel."

The fact that whole verses, whole narratives and almost whole chapters of this Gospel agree literally with those of other Gospels, proves that either it or they are, in the main, compilations, and not original authority, or that the extent of the alterations which occurred in producing such forced accord between them, was so great as to destroy the value of the whole as evidence. We may also add that, had the work been taken from the instructions of Peter or any other of the Apostles, there was every reason to have said so, and every reason, now, to presume that it would have been so claimed in the work itself. It is evidently not the work of any of the original eye-witnesses, nor directly taken from them.

THIRD GOSPEL.

The Gospel entitled "according to St. Luke" has been supposed, but upon wholly insufficient evidence, to have been written by one Lucus, a companion of Paul. Of this Lucus, even, little is known. The date of its composition is wholly uncertain, having been placed as the latter part of the second century; while its special supporters place it about the year A. D. 60. It was late before it was ranked with the other canonical books. It purports to have been written for the instruction of one Theophilus, as to the beliefs among Christians which were then most surely credited. The work rests under the general pall of doubt hanging over all the Gospels, and, in addition to this, it neither makes a pretence of being based upon the evidence of those who knew anything about the facts related, nor leaves any room for us to assume or suppose anything about it; but expressly claims to be an exposition of the more general *belief* as to such facts, prevalent to the time it was written. It therefore can be evidence of nothing more than the then state of Christian beliefs; and consequently could *not* have been written from the verbal narratives of any of the Apostles, as has been suggested. The author doubtlessly never saw Jesus, and perhaps none of his Apostles.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

The narrative entitled "The Gospel according to St. John," has been generally credited to the "Beloved Disciple," and yet this has been strongly contested by both Christians and Skeptics. The ancient sect of Alogi, living only some two hundred years after Jesus, rejected this Gospel as spurious; while some others claimed that it had been greatly tampered with, and matter interpolated on purpose to confute their own doctrines. Polycarp, who saw and knew John personally, does not mention him in connection with the authorship of any Gospel. Francus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, a voluminous writer and great controversialist, never invokes the authority of John, although his position and labors directly imposed upon him the duty of defending the authority of the Gospels. The first conceded citation from this Gospel is found in Theophilus of Antioch, written about the year A. D. 172. There is no real knowledge as to who wrote it, or as to when it was written or where it was written. Even the life of John is wholly overlooked in the New Testament after the final departure of Jesus. His master had requested him to take care of his old Mother, and, so far as we know, he may have remained in Galilee for that purpose. Of course, Tradition tells us all about him and about everybody else, but this tradition is as full of absurdities as of lies, and modern Protestants concede its worthlessness. If it proves anything, it proves far too many things.

We have now glanced at the *sources* from which we derive the facts or recitals upon which we are to decide. We have seen the humble, ignorant and superstitious men of an ignorant and superstitious class of an ancient and subject race, as well as their not more attractive, nor more credible female associates, who were the chosen witnesses of Jesus and the chief agents in moulding, and giving currency to the original stories which constitutes the seed-bed from which sprung the oral and written traditions, myths, legends and Gospels constituting the muniments of the Christian Faith during the first ages, and from which were selected the New Testament narratives. We have seen that there was no systematic endeavor either to write a life of Jesus or to embody his doctrines for the benefit of the public or of posterity, but that the writings of early Christianity were either the fugitive responses called forth by special conditions and needs or the eager productions of fanatical propagandists or zealous controversialists,—nowhere assuming either the character or candor of history. We have seen that none of these documents were considered, during those ages, as either “Scripture” or as infallible, but were each accepted for what they were deemed worth by the reader,—those subsequently decreed to be canonical as well as those left as uncanonical; and that, by reason of their reliance upon oral tradition and the *lex non scripta*, and of their estimate of the writers and their writings, and more especially in view of their exclusively temporary utility on account of their impending destruction in that of the World, the founders and early disciples of Christianity took no pains either to secure a history of Jesus or his church

or to preserve even such occasional writings as the temporary emergencies elicited or even to transmit correct copies of them. We have seen that these early writings were numerous, and presented such a contradictory and absurd mass of myths, legends and lies as to wholly obscure the original facts, and render them a source of contention and humiliation to the triumphant "Court Church" of Constantine and his successors, and to compel an attempt to select, from this crude and puerile mass, the least childish and humiliating elements and leave the residue to sink into comparative oblivion. We have seen our utter lack of verification for our present record and our absolute want of all real knowledge as to the authorship of our received Gospels, and the impenetrable cloud of *doubt* which hangs over everything pertaining to the actors and witnesses, and to their testimony. We have seen the extinction of all the earlier copies of our accepted books, and the altogether astounding number of differences between those still existing, and the confession that these alterations have been, not only the result of innocent carelessness and mistakes, but have been systematically and intentionally produced and propagated to favor the concord and consistency of the Christian records as well as to establish the peculiar views and doctrines of their mutilators and interpolaters;—and all this from the very latest and highest Christian authority. We have also had a faithful and vivid picture of the men and their times, who took upon themselves to select for us, by a majority vote, what we should believe and what we should not believe, under the pains of eternal damnation.

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This cursory review is not intended to enlighten the learned, but to place before the minds of the ordinary reader an epitome of the well-known facts, with a view to enable him, if he *dares*, to form some general estimate of the nature and value of the testimony with which we are to deal, and to answer for himself the question—whether he *can*, in justice to his own manhood and common sense, accord divine sanctity and infallibility to such testimony, so made, so selected, and so preserved?—Whether he can, rationally and without all bias and coercion, believe that the good God so formed and so preserved the “words of eternal life,” and decreed eternal banishment and torture upon those who did not accept its infallibility?

My purpose has been accomplished if this summary review of the history of the evidence and what may still further be said in that regard, shall even partially prevail in slackening those iron bands by which superstition and education have hooped, clamped and controlled the reason, fears and hopes of mankind. The evidence furnished by our gospels does not even *purport* to be *inspired*, nor were those Gospels claimed to have been inspired, either by those who wrote, or those who received them; and we have seen how it was, when it was, and by whom it was that their inspiration was first decreed; and now, if the reader can force himself to realize that, at best, they are no more than what they purport to be, and what they were considered to be by those who wrote and those who received them, and will cease, especially, to treat them as *self-verified*, when the very facts of their authenticity and inspiration are in question, the road to truth will, at least, once more be open,—even if it be but dim and uncertain.

Even if we waive, however, the unknown origin of the Gospels and the certainty of their mutilations and changes as well as the unfavorable significance of the characters of their authors, selectors and manipulators, it still becomes important to form some general estimate or notion of the real and judicial value of such antique reliques, even if they were conceded to be the authentic writings of those whose names are prefixed to them.

From their want of internal connection, coherence and congruity, from their simple aggregation of abrupt and disconnected facts and fragments, without even an attempt to string them together by any current thread of sequences or in any chronological order, from their more than suspicious verbal agreements throughout long recitals at some points, and their palpable contradictions at others, it would appear that at least more than one of these Gospels must have been mere aggregated excerpts from then existing writings, with some partial connecting matter from oral traditions ; or that they have been *forced* into such harmonies by fraudulent alterations. They seem to have been but crude jottings, from the beginning ; and now exhibit the successive travel-stains of a long and rough journey. As they now stand they present a growth watered, clipped and grafted by many nurserymen ; and, could we now ingraft upon them the innumerable and ever-changing modern phases of construction which would, in earlier times, have found their way into the text, the whole would present a very fair view of the intellectual and moral growth of Christian peoples. They are the self-expression of the agencies of a religious revolution. The whole mass of these Chris-

tian writings were but the product of the efforts of an ignorant and superstitious, but developing people to weave and construct the framework and covering for the budding germs of a divine evolution planted by Jesus—efforts which were at the same time to transmit to future ages the many-voiced echoes of the childish conceptions, beliefs, ideals and aspirations of the workers in that nebulous and fiery prelude to the triumph of Christianity. They mainly consist of the mutilated remains of anonymous narratives of specific and chosen portions of the life and sayings of Jesus—sayings and doings such as, after much confused wranglings and after many friendly chattings and many mutual suggestions, reminders and concessions, those early, zealous and credulous followers of Jesus hoped, desired and finally imagined them to have been, or such as they supposed *ought* to, and *therefore must* have been, to fulfil the supposed prophecies about Christ;—which Christ, Jesus himself clearly *was*, at least *to them*.

One secret underlies much of the evidence recorded in the Gospels which it is very difficult for us to realize, but also very necessary for us to understand. Men of the Gospel Age and of the country and class to which the Evangelists belonged, had no conception of the *sacredness of history*, and but little, if any, for truth for the mere sake of truth. In the East, men of that day did not, any more than they do now, regard deception for a desired end or for a friend, and especially for a good

object and where it was not injurious to others, as being a sin—did not, and do not now, regard it at all as we regard it. They wrote, indeed, to establish what they deemed a great truth, but not the truth of historic details,—nor history in any sense. They wrote and preached, not for the future, nor for the mere sake of accurately recording events, but for the purpose of securing the belief of the multitude in the divine mission of Jesus, and to this righteous end all things were made to bend. Actuated by the spirit of a court of Equity, they considered those things as done which “ought to have been done,” and fearlessly asserted as true what they supposed to have been true. Having once undoubtedly accepted Jesus as the Saviour of the World, after he was supposed to have risen from the dead, they did not hesitate to imagine and believe that whatsoever was to happen to, or about, or to be done by, the prophesied Messiah, *must of necessity* have been fulfilled in *some* form in Jesus ; for, Could the prophecies lie ?—and was not Jesus the very Christ, *proven* so to be by his resurrection ? Whatever prophecies they could remember to have heard about the Christ, and which could, in any form, be forced into the service of Jesus without palpably contradicting the principal and known facts of his life, will be found inserted into one or another of his Gospels by either their authors or their interpolaters. What is very significant of their blind and unscrupulous zeal in this regard, is the fact that in some instances they have cited and fulfilled prophecies in Jesus, which he himself not only never claimed, but had expressly urged and argued that they did not apply to the Christ at all ; while still other prophecies are gravely cited and fulfilled

where *no such prophecies exist* in the Scriptures, but were mere citations from the popular volume of "Chimney Corner law;" and still other prophecies are cited and fulfilled so lamely and inappropriately as to be ludicrous; as for example a prophecy, whose *fulfilment* was to be a sign to convince a king who had reigned some thousand or more years before, and which was said have been actually fulfilled in the brief period assigned for its fulfilment—namely: a prophecy that a virgin should have a son, and that his *name* should be *called Emmanuel*, was somehow imagined to apply to the Messiah, and consequently, in defiance of all the facts and the express terms of the prophecy, they tell us that Jesus was this little Emmanuel with a virgin mother—both of whom were dead long centuries before; and that the Lord had told Joseph in a dream, that his wife, Mary, should bring forth a son and should call his *name* "*Jesus!*"—a name which was wholly unlike that of "Emmanuel" and wholly different in signification. And, in additional fulfilment of the prophecy, they found out, some quarter or half a century after the crucifixion of Jesus, that his mother, who was married to Joseph, was still a *virgin* at his conception—that the husband and wife had not as yet "come together!"—a fact which was clearly never known, or even hinted at, in the lifetime of Jesus by either the words or conduct of himself or of his mother! The fact that they had ever heard of a prophecy, whether in the Scriptures or not, which they supposed might apply to the Messiah was sufficient to insure a belief that it must have been, and had been, fulfilled in the Son of Mary;—for, Was it not impossible for the prophecies to lie? and had not Jesus actually

arisen from the dead? and Was he not therefore the veritable, proven Christ? How, then, *could the fact be otherwise than the prophecy of that fact?* And was it not all-important to the conversion of the Jews that every available prophecy which might, by possibility, have been fulfilled in the life of Jesus should be seized upon and appropriated, after his crucifixion, seeing that all the long cherished Messianic hopes of his race and of his own chosen disciples had been so signally blasted by his own unsuccessful efforts and humiliating execution as a criminal? A doubt as to the propriety of such efforts and constructions never entered their minds, while a scruple to *assert as unqualifiedly true* what they believed to be true, or imagined to be true, or that they judged or supposed to be true, never troubled them for a moment. They never discriminated between the degrees of certainty, nor qualified or graded their statements, judgments, inferences, information, general rumor, supposed prophetic necessities, a dream of Joseph in the land of Egypt, happening half a century before, or the still more remote dreams, or rather *joint dream*, of the famous "Wise men of the East"—persons whom they had never seen, were all simply and plumply stated as facts, and in the language and style in which they recited actually-witnessed facts. The "ifs and ands," the provisos, the probablys, the references to authorities, the qualifications and the like, were all left to "other men and other times." They themselves had never doubted or demanded proofs,—Why should they think them necessary for others? Nor do they even pretend to have either divine or human authority for such bold statements.

The very fact was, as we have intimated, that they did not write, nor bear witness with a special view to the truth of the matters narrated, but narrated for the purpose of a truth—narrated to produce belief in a given fact—a fact they verily believed, and considered that a belief in which would bring endless felicity and honor to the believer and glory to the witnesses and agents through whom he was convinced. Eternal beatitude awaited belief, and immortal crowns and palms of glory were the reward of the witnesses and laborers for Jesus, however the belief and conversion of their hearers might be won. The great truth for which they labored demanded a blind faith and devotion, and for these it offered inducements which sounded the very depths of human motives, whether of hope or fear. Upon this *belief* depended all that was worth hoping or fearing. For this sole and supreme need, Could their zeal be too great on the eve of that “great day” which was to decide the fate of all men? Was it not right to be “all things to all men,” that peradventure some might be saved, and to say with St. Paul:—“For if the *truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory*, why yet am I *judged a sinner?*” Were history and facts to stand in the way of *one* fact—of the “*one thing needful*”—in the way of *God’s truth*? Who dare condemn as a sin the *lying* “unto the glory of God,” or in order that the “truth of God” might more abound? Were not *all* things to bend to this supreme purpose?

But Can such men be honest? We reply, yes,—honest in purpose, and honest to their own convictions and sense of right, and no man can be more. The principle quoted from St. Paul, and the one upon which the early disciples and Church acted, would not now receive the highest approval, nor does it appear that Jesus himself sanctioned it, at least as a general principle. It is as unwise, however, to judge those early men by our standards of intelligence and morals as it is to permit them to force their own standards upon ourselves, or the declarations made in pursuance of them. It is difficult for us to judge, or even realize, such men and such times. The first disciples were what men of their class and of their times might be supposed to have been when they were even more credulous than their credulous class, and when they were inspired by a burning conviction of a “divine mission” and had a full belief that they were working for the good of man and the “glory of God.” They were not responsible for being born in a phase of development which engendered no conception, much less regard, for the true sacredness of history or for literary honesty. These are things of later growth—of the latest and highest, indeed. If we visit, even now, the scenes of their labors, What shall we find in the minds of the Jews and Arabs of Palestine which responds to such ideas? Such peoples and classes habitually and naturally create their myths and legends, mould and remodel their heroes and traditions, and invent parables, and interpret their dreams with a view to the embodiment and *concrete expression* of their growing conceptions, their worship, their ideals, their sympathies, their morals and spiritual aspirations, or, lastly, to *pro-*

duce some desired effect in others. They do not even *think* in the abstract, and have no more concern in *modifying actual characters and events* to concretely express their ideas or subserve their desires, than they have in inventing myths, legends and parables for that purpose, or than has a modern novelist in fictitiously embodying his views. The teaching of Jesus by *parables* was the type of all effective teaching to such minds. To speak of great principles or abstract ideas to such men is to aim above their capacity. To deprive them of thinking of, and worshipping God as a divine man—as a God with “body and parts” and with a local habitation, was to deprive them of thinking of God at all. People in this phase of development, when desiring to thus concretely express their ideals and spiritual longings, naturally seize upon the first person, living or dead, who even slightly responds to their psychical needs, and force his person, life and character into some representative expression of their own ideas, morals, or spiritual life and longings; or, in lack of such, will manufacture a hero, a God, or their lives and adventures, out of imaginary materials altogether. Such has been the uniform mental moods and habits of all primitive and developing peoples. To judge people, thus endeavoring to concretely embody and express their spiritual life and manifestations or to instruct, persuade or control others in conformity therewith, as we would judge the modern historian, whose only *object* is the recording of the facts of actual life for the *sake of preserving them as facts*, is as unjust as it is delusive. Such men regard *facts* as subservient to *purpose*, and while they do not change or adulterate the facts *without* a purpose, they freely and

unhesitatingly subordinate facts to their conceptions and desires. That the facts used by them should, slower or faster, assume the hues and mould of their desires and beliefs, was inevitable.

This method of creating and adulterating facts has existed among all peoples, and has obscured the entire early history of the Race. The early history of all peoples are legendary and mythic. Nor have the principles or causes producing such results ceased to operate even in our time. A candid and well-informed person will not fail to find evidences of its operations in our own accounts, both traditional and written, of our national struggles and victories, as well as in our partially mythic renderings of the acts and characters of our representative men,—such as Washington, Crockett, Lincoln and Joseph Smith—the Mormon; nor could he fail to find its operations exemplified in every slander and rumor which moulds the private and public character of the citizen. Nothing is more difficult than to trace the source, progress and responsibility of these creations and remouldings of facts. Like all false rumors they seem to grow with their circulation, as to assume form and color from their channels of circulation;—often so gradually as to fix neither their exact date, nor their responsibility. Myths, legends and historic perversions, especially religious ones, seem to be natural growths,—incident to all, but especially to the earlier stages of human civilization.

There are two facts in human nature which should never be overlooked in estimating of the testimony and conduct of the propagators of those religions which claim to determine man's future destiny,—namely: their general and resistless tendency to inspire an unscrupulous zeal and a blind partizanship; and secondly, the controlling desire and tendency of men to accept and believe the marvellous and mysterious,—especially where the matter concerns the question of the existence and nature of the Spirit World. We need not much concern ourselves with the reason of these proclivities, since all human history and experience prove the fact of their existence. That history shows that the propagation of such religions notoriously elicit the fiercest, the blindest, the cruellest and most unscrupulous elements in human nature, is not to be doubted. It is in vain to hope for judicial impartiality and historic accuracy from either friendly or unfriendly ecclesiastical sources. The nature of the subject and the emotions it inspires are self-blinding; while man cannot *practice* our modern maxim that “ends do not justify the means.” Even Men who concede the doctrine cannot practically divest themselves of the opposite notion, but habitually justify or shield what they deem conducive to the “glory of God.” Our every-day experiences show that our churches will, not only endeavor to hush-up, but will actually defend their priests and preachers from charges of immorality, in the face of evidence upon which they would unhesitatingly condemn a skeptic or sinner,—and all for the glory of God and the honor of his church. Every church festival for raising money, with its sexual allurements, its lotteries, its post offices, and its other means of extor-

tion, presents scenes which would meet the censure of the good people of the church were they practiced for other purposes ; while the consciences of these good people are wholly soothed by the success of the "good cause," even by *such* means ; and yet would chuckle with delight over a hundred-dollar-bill won from some old voluptuary by a kiss from the deacon's daughter or wife. Their conscience sleeps under their self-gratulations for pious motives and the success of divine means.

These proclivities and practices are more strikingly manifested in the earlier and more fiery phases of religious propagandism. Each Sect, blind to its own mistaken or surreptitious methods, is indignantly alive to the inexcusable means and modes resorted to by all the others. Christianity has certainly proved no safeguard against these tendencies of the human nature, but has, probably, through the excessive zeal of its devotees, been exceptionably subject to them. Of this fact, we are not only assured by history and experience, but we can have the Protestant half of it proved for us by the Catholics, and the Catholic half of it proven by the Protestants. It is not only indubitably true that holy fictions and pious deceits, as well as frauds and forgeries, have been common instruments in the hands of churchmen from the very days of the Apostles down to the Jesuitical priests of our own time, but it is also true that, until a very recent date, they were very generally justified by the Church, and that they are still frequently justified, and still oftener practiced. Even where the Church has not dared to openly justify such means, she has been the promptest to conceal, and the last to confess them : while she has not scrupled to receive the benefit of them so

long as they could be made serviceable before the ignorant. Long before the advent of Christianity, Ezekiel the prophet, makes the Lord say :—"If a prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the *Lord have deceived* that prophet"—(xiv. 9): while in 1 Kings—(xxii. 20–23), we are told that God expressly sent a heavenly messenger to put a "*lying spirit*" into Ahab's prophets, that they might deceive him and lure him to his own destruction. Such, the Bible teaches us, were the means which even God used to subserve his purposes. Jesus himself declares, (Mark iv. 11–12) that he spake in obscure and delusive parables to the Jews (which even his own disciples could not understand, but which he privately explained to them,) for the express purpose of preventing them from understanding them ;—lest they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven ! In this instance Jesus seems to have by no means risen above the temper and spirit of his race and time, and to have set an example which, but too many of his followers have not been slow to follow. St. Paul boasts that, for the purpose of winning different peoples, he had specially accommodated himself or his teachings to each people, —and had been "all things to all men ;" and he expressly avows that he won his proselytes "*by guile*" —(2 Cor. xii. 16). He also boldly asserts (2 Thes. ii. 11, 12) that *God sent strong delusion* upon unbelievers, that they *might* believe in a *lie* and be *damned* ! In Romans—(iii. 7), he stoutly defends himself for *lying for the glory of God*,—as we have already quoted. Eusebius, the first great church historian, and the one upon whom we chiefly depend for our knowledge of

the early Christian church, unhesitatingly avows that he related whatever might redound to the glory of his religion, and suppressed whatever might tend to its disgrace—(Gibbon, vol. ii. ch. 16). The object and limit of our work will not justify further illustration on this point. What has been already shown is sufficiently conclusive that early Christians did and said whatever would advance Christianity.

The second tendency to which attention has been called,—namely, the tendency to maintain and believe in the miraculous or supernatural, will require still less consideration. It is, indeed, scarcely possible for one, even tolerably observant of the history and workings of human nature, to fail to recognize the inappeasable longings of most men's minds—(and of all women's), to get a glimpse into, or a word from, the realms of the Unknown, and their almost resistless tendency to make "the wish the father to the thought"—to accept, and try to believe what they desire. To be assured of this, one has but to remember the mysterious attractions and successes, in all ages and countries, of the fortune-teller, the clairvoyant, the prophet, and the "spirit-mediums." The high and low, alike, from the high official to the school mistress and serving girl, even in our day, are to be found secretly consulting the Pythic utterances of the two former, while not contemptible Scientists defend, and crowds of people witness and believe in, the powers and utterances of the latter. Defeats do not dampen the

audacity of the performers, because they know that exposures do not shake the confidence of their dupes. A single semblance of success, with them, will outweigh a thousand failures. How could it be otherwise? Their faith, based upon an itching hope, is not the offspring of reason, and therefore is not amenable to its laws. It is born of a persistent aspiration, and is therefore persistent itself,—even in defiance of reason, save as reason shall come to its aid. In the darkened rooms of the “medium,” with their very flesh creeping at the idea of the presence of a ghost, most people are incapable of detecting the most bare-faced impostures and cheapest juggleries ; while every woman who has called for the presence of some departed friend, would equally recognize their friend in the one, same dim and misty face exhibited by the thaumaturgist.

In view of these facts, then, we should be unfaithful to truth and reason, were we to fail in taking into account these two potent influences in estimating the evidence furnished us by those ancient religious devotees touching their own miracle-born religion.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EPOCH OF MYTHS AND MIRACLES.

To those who accept ready-made opinions with a faith so blind as to enable them to read the history of human actions and beliefs without ever seeing beyond the glamour cast by their own inherited creeds, it may become a question whether the wonderful Age which gave birth to their own marvellous religion and Man-God, could also warm into life other miraculous beings, make other Men-Gods, and weave other legends, myths and miracle-stories similar to their own. A very cursory reading of history, however, will show that the period including the early development and triumph of Christianity and a few centuries preceding the birth of Jesus, was especially prolific in these regards. During no other similar period, perhaps, should we find the apotheosis of men so prevalent or the myth-forming and miracle-producing tendency so active. It embraces the time when the Roman power was rapidly approaching its zenith and the earlier ages of its supreme triumph. At the birth of Jesus the struggling peoples had already ceased to dispute the supremacy of Rome, and for an age there had been unexampled political repose—the universal peace of subjection. The entire political and

military power of the world centred around one imperial figure at Rome. The recuperated energies of the subject nations were deprived of their usual outlet in the presence of the resistless legions of the Empire, and were driven to find vent in the fields of mental, moral and religious development. This enforced leisure had not come too soon. Then, if ever, Humanity demanded a new religious birth. Intelligent Thinkers had long since smiled at the old popular myths and symbolizations of the Egyptian, Greek and Roman Mythologies; and the old notions had gradually ceased to satisfy the average intelligence and aspirations of the people. Men had also outgrown the iron spirit of their old legal codes. The world, in short, was ripe for a religious revolution,—as the growth and triumph of Christianity demonstrated.

The Polytheistic peoples needed, and were partially prepared for, a more unified and Monotheistic conception of the controlling powers of the Universe. That they could leap, at a single bound, from the worship of a whole hierarchy of Gods and divine beings, to the conception of a sole, all-controlling God, was not to have been expected. The new religion would have to, and did, accommodate itself to their mental condition, and bridge the way for them from Polytheism to Monotheism. The fanciful Greek must be aided to abandon his Olympian hierarchy and his poetic world of inferior deities, by offering him substitutes—by offering, say, three Gods in one, and a hierarchy consisting of “Sons of God,” Mother of God,” Archangels, Angels and Saints.

A new God was not the need of the Jew. He was already a Monotheist. He really needed, but was illy prepared for, a God of more humane, equitable and catholic nature and sympathies—a beneficent God of Humanity, and not a “God of the Jews.” He was politically enslaved, and his religion and civilization were fast crystallizing into the immobility of Pharisaic Formalism. His solitary hope of redemption from all this was in the Messiah. The prophetic Messianic idea and hope formed the true progressive and ideal element in his religion. Through this, and not otherwise, could he be reached. His people had early longed for, and anticipated a regeneration of the World, but it was to be achieved at Jerusalem, and by their own God, and through the agency and premiership of their own race, and must be heralded and accompanied by all the “signs” and indicia predicted by their own prophets. His ideal had already been fixed for him by his God, speaking through the mouths of his prophets. He could not give up the Old, which had thus been fixed by his God: the New must conform to, and exemplify it. This prophesied Saviour constituted just that cloudy, undeterminable and plastic element which could readily be mythically moulded to suit the views and aspirations of Gentile peoples who had no previous knowledge of the Jewish prophecies, nor fixed traditional interpretations of them. But to the Jew, who had all this, the proposed Messiah would have to come with all the traditionally-established “signs,” or need not come at all. To him, the Messianic Conception had long assumed a form too definite and fixed to yield to the pressure and requirements of the myth-world. These “signs” were not a subject

of doubt: they were to be exemplified in one of the Hebrew "princes of the blood"—by a "Son of David," were to occur in their own midst, and be subject to the intelligent decision of their own race,—especially of the priests of their God and the religious Rulers of the people. When he *did* come, there could be no question as to his identity. The sanctity of the supposed divine prophecies of the Jews might be appropriated, and their fragments be perverted for giving color to the claims of a religious Saviour of the unadvised Gentiles, but the Messiah of the Jews who had, for a thousand years, been anticipated according to a fixed idea of Christ, must actually fill the measure of the established conception. They were willing to believe, but it must be upon open and practical proof, not upon myths and rumors. Never, indeed, had the Jews been so anxious to be *enabled to believe*, nor so feverishly expectant of the coming of their Christ as during the Age including the career of Jesus and up to the final fall of Jerusalem. All hearts were praying and watching for the Prince who was to re-establish them in more than their ancient glory, and should transfer the seat of influence and universal dominion from Rome to Jerusalem. Under the galling yoke of the Gentiles and wrought into a state of spiritual Exaltation and feverish expectancy, the multitude were in the exact condition to force the prophecies and foster Messianic pretenders; while even the wisest were anxious to believe where belief was possible. Jesus himself recognized this state of things and anticipated its production of many "false Christs."

Such feverish desires and anticipations were but

the natural forerunners of what occurred—were, in fact, a part both of the processes and agencies by which the inevitable revolution was to be effected. Nature was then in the act of closing one of her long periods of incubation, and on the eve of hatching that religious offspring which, for centuries after, she continued to nurse into life and vigor. This new heir of Progress could not have been born without the accustomed preparations, anticipations and symptoms—without the fever and unrest attending all parturitions and revolutions. Never had there been a greater birth, nor was there ever a birth followed by more sleepless care and coddling,—never were the upturnings, clippings, patchings, remodellings, re-trimings, re-adaptations and re-namings so numerous and complete.

The robes of this new heir were neither of new material, nor of a new pattern. The myths-moulds in which the divine conception, the divine nature, and the miraculous nativity, life and powers of Jesus were moulded, after his supposed resurrection, were not new to the world. In more or less modified forms they had often appeared before. Among the many races who furnished materials or types for Christian ideas, the Brahmins and Buddhists have, perhaps, furnished those for the most important and fundamental ones. In Chrishna and in Vishu and his incarnations we find very full and complete suggestions of the Christ idea of the Christians and of the fundamental conceptions of Christian Theology. In regard to some of the mythic features of the Christ, however, more literally exact types were found in the mythic growths of the people who were long the

masters of Judea and were still residing in Palestine in large numbers, and were in daily intercourse with Christians everywhere, during those first ages. The idea of the divine and immaculate conception of Jesus by a virgin mother, had already been paralleled by the Greeks. Plato had been claimed by them to have been the child of the Sun-God, Apollo, by Perictone, a *virgin mother*. Perictone was *betrothed* to Aristion, but because of the appearance of Apollo to the betrothed husband in a *dream*, and his announcement that Perictone was with child by the God himself, she was *kept pure* from all matrimonial intercourse with her husband, until her accouchment. Any one who can read this account in connection with the account of the affair between Joseph, Mary and the Holy Ghost, described in the first chapter of Matthew, and fail to perceive that they are reading a "twice told tale," is indeed blind.

Pythagoras had a similar origin, and performed miracles equalling those of Jesus. But it was in his own Age and in the adjoining country of Syria, that we find the truest type, and more than rival, of Jesus as a thaumaturgist. During their lives, the works and fame of Jesus bore no comparison, in their notoriety and magnitude, to those of the Syrian miracle-worker, Appolonius of Tyana. The life and performances of this singular man were very startling. Sir Edward Bulwer gives a summary of some of his performances in the mocking tone assumed by all Christians when speaking of all other wonder-workers save their own, and in the following language: "All sorts of prodigies accompanied the *birth* of this gentleman. Proteus, the Egyptian God, foretold to his

mother yet pregnant, that it was *he himself* who was about to re-appear in the World through her agency.

* * Appollonius knew the language of birds, read men's thoughts in their bosoms, and walked about with a familiar spirit. He was a devil of a fellow with a devil, and induced a mob to stone a poor demon of a venerable and mendicant appearance, who, after the lapidary operation, changed into a huge dog. He *raised the dead*. He passed a night with Achilles, and when Domitian was murdered (at Rome) he called out aloud (although at Ephesus at the moment),—‘Strike the tyrant!’ The end of so honest and great a man was worthy of his life. It would seem that *he ascended into Heaven*.” He certainly figured much more extensively and openly than did Jesus, his neighbor of Nazareth, and his audiences and witnesses were far more varied, intelligent and disinterested. He discussed his theories and performed his alleged miracles before the most intelligent bodies and classes in every country from the Tiber to the Ganges and the Nile. His powers of healing were considered miraculous and divine, and priests and people alike paid him divine honors. His wonderful powers secured him the confidence of, and a controlling influence over, the Emperor Vespasian and his son Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem. At his death temples were erected in his honor, and he was worshipped as a God; while cities contended for the honor of having been his birth-place, and the successful competitor was raised to the dignity of a “sacred city.”

We are also assured by one of the Christian Fathers, that the Simon Magus of the New Testament—a rival

of the Apostles in wonder-working,—finally went to Rome and was there worshipped as a God. And we know that it was then the custom of the Roman Senate to apotheosize their Emperors and decree them divine honors and worship,—sometimes even in their lifetimes; and all this during the miracle-working and myth-forming ages of Christianity. And speedily following, we find a like phase of development entered into by the Arabs, and producing that still more striking and successful parallel to Jesus,—Mahomet.

But in the number, extravagance and grotesqueness of her legends and her mythic formations, no people or sect could vie with the early Christians. Consisting, as the early Church did, mainly of slaves and the lower classes, she formed a rich mould for such luxurious growths. From the beginning, the disciples claimed special divine endowments and gifts, and cited them in proof of the divine approbation of their assertions and doctrines. They raved in “unknown tongues” till people thought them drunk—in languages which St. Paul, however, assures us could not be understood by anybody until it was explained by somebody having the divine gift of “interpretation.” They claimed to have the power, also, of working miracles like Jesus. Besides these general gifts of the “Faithful,” there were innumerable cases of special endowments and sanctity won by self-abnegation and abuse. For centuries, the more fanatical of those early Christians flocked by tens-of-thousands and even by hundreds-of-thousands to the deserts of Syria and Africa, and there, abandoning the world and all the duties of life, gave themselves up to

the most loathsome filth and most appalling and disgusting asceticism, for the avowed purpose of crushing out every earthly desire and hope and every mortal tie and human sympathy—in short, everything that made them human. These grim, emaciated, and foully filthy monomaniacs and fanatics of the desert, formed the subjects and nuclei around which grew up unnumbered legendary and mythical stories, abounding in marvels and miracles,—most of them too absurd and childish for us to conceive how sane men could ever have invented or believed them. And yet these sad figures of the desert answer to the roll-call of our Christian *saints*, and receive a worship from millions of Christians, more devout than was ever paid to Juno or Vulcan.

Higher still than these or even than the eternal angels themselves, have been placed the semi-apotheosized Apostles; and higher even than the Archangels sits the “Prince of the Apostles,” controlling the very keys of Heaven. Higher still,—higher than all beings below God himself, sits,—radiant and crowned,—the “Queen of Heaven” and “Mother of God,”—the once aged, meek and much-snubbed Nazarene mother;—by far the most divinely-human creation of all the galaxy.

High over all these, however, and forever lost in the very being and identity of God, has vanished the old identity of Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth:—the ultimate product and supreme symbol of centuries of conclusive and creative religious evolution! Can any rational person cast a glance over this list of

mythic creations and marvellous growths, and still hesitate to believe in the plastic, myth-creating powers and tendencies of the Apostolic and Saintly ages? Need we either fear or hesitate to affirm that this Christian development and growth was but another and final step in religious evolution and progressive concrete symbolism :—having its lowest forms and expressions, (such as its use of the miraculous virtues of the shrines, bones, clothes, teeth and toe-nails of saints,)—still resting upon the original fetichism from which it sprung, and this, its last and highest concrete expression, bodily merged in the Infinite God? Can we doubt that it was a grand stretch of human development, embodying within itself, and actually constituting, a metamorphosed epitome of all previous phases of religious evolution.

When, in view of all considerations mentioned, we examine, as evidence, and judicially determine the value of, the sayings, doings and beliefs of the religious devotees, fanatics and interested partisans, handed down to us in the careless, fraudulent and unmerciful manner we have considered, by the traditions and the fugitive and anonymous writings of that incandescent, plastic, superstitious and revolutionary epoch,—May we not—nay, must we not cast away the soul-paralyzing and reason-defying *awe and terror* which an idea of their divine sacredness,—fostered by the decrees and exhortations of an interested priesthood and accepted and instilled into us by an ignorant and superstitious an-

cestry,—has inspired us? Is it not the plainest dictate of common sense and common manhood to treat such evidence as we would the tradition history of all early ages and the similar stories and legends of all other religions originating under like phases of development?

CHAPTER VII.

THE EFFECT OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS UPON
THE WITNESSES AND THEIR TESTIMONY.

ALTHOUGH the effect of the resurrection upon the evidence of the disciples and followers of Jesus has been noticed in a general way, that influence was so specific and decisive as to make a clear comprehension of it essential to a just appreciation of the value of the evidence furnished by the Gospels. As has been contended, Christianity, or the possibility of it, did not exist until some thirty-six hours after Jesus was taken from the cross. When he then re-appeared to his disciples, it was inevitable. There is, as we have seen, not the slightest difficulty upon this point. The Gospels have left nothing to inference or construction in regard to it. The public career of Jesus finally closed with his descent from the cross. This put to flight the last possible hope which his followers might have previously entertained concerning his earthly prospects. They regarded him as dead. And with his death, died their hopes. As his aiders and abettors they themselves were in hiding for their own safety. This fact, as well as the entire after conduct and language both of Jesus and themselves, shows that they neither had expected, nor been *taught* to

expect, any *post mortem* manifestations, or the inauguration of any merely religious movement.

It is without the pale of rational belief, that Jesus had taught his disciples that all their efforts would end in his own ignominious failure and execution, but that he would return to life on the third day as the head of religious movement ; or, had such prediction been made, it is not less incredible that, after one part of it had been so tragically fulfilled, not one of all his disciples should have, *even then*, recalled it, and have anticipated his resurrection. Nor is it credible that he could have induced his disciples to follow him around for years, aid him in his efforts to be accepted by the Jews as their temporal prince, and to finally proclaim and herald him as King at Jerusalem, as they did do, had Jesus told them, and desired them to understand, that their whole labor was to end in utter failure and public ignominy,—would prove, in fact, a mere costly and tragic sham. Jesus could not fail to make them understand so plain a fact, if he had tried to make them do so. Nor would Jesus have so long labored to win over the people to his cause, have suffered himself to be proclaimed king, and thereby subject both himself and his followers to the penalties of treason, have abused the Jews for not accepting him, and then stood above Jerusalem and wept over her rejection of him, if he had all along known that he was *not* to be accepted, but had voluntarily come into the world expressly to *be* what he *wept* for *having become*. The idea that Jesus either foreknew his fate or tried to make his disciples foreknow it is rendered absurd by the entire facts. It was wholly an afterthought, a

lame effort to cure the palpable objection that, *if* Jesus were a divine person, he *must and would* have known all about it.

This whole matter, however, is put still further beyond doubt by the conduct and positive declarations of both Jesus and his disciples after the resurrection. In talking to Jesus himself, on the road to Emmaus, after his re-appearance, his disciples, not recognizing him, speak of him as follows :—"Jesus of Nazareth, which was a *prophet* mighty in deed and in word before the Lord and all the people. And now the chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned, and have crucified him. But *we trusted* that it had been he which *should* have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since those things were done. Yea, and certain women of our company made us *astonished*, which were early at the sepulchre: And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels which said he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he (Jesus) said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the *prophets* have spoken: *Ought* not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scripture concerning himself"—(see Luke, xxiv. 19, et seq.). Here we have the views of both parties. The disciples, before his execution, *had* regarded him as a *prophet*, and had *trusted* that he was the expected prince who was to "redeem Israel," but were mistaken and dis-

appointed, since he had actually been executed ; but that strange stories had been started about his being alive, etc. Jesus expresses no astonishment, in his turn, at his disciples for forgetting what he had told them, nor did he remind them of any such fact, or upbraid them for want of faith in him or his declarations, but, to the exclusion of all this, he rebukes them for not having faith in the *prophecies*, which, he contended, had foretold these results. All this would seem clear enough. In fact, the Fourth Gospel declares in express terms, in explanation of the ignorance of the disciples about the fact of resurrection, that "*as yet*, they knew not the *scripture* that he must arise again from the dead." Here, as with Jesus' own language, there is no thought, hint or question as to the fact of Jesus having ever *told* them about it.

Being, therefore, unprepared for such an event, his disciples were astonished and even appalled by his re-appearance in the flesh. But, when once forced to realize the fact, and induced to believe that it was in fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies, the effects were decisive—there was no more lack of faith. It was no longer Jesus the prophet, but the Christ, the Messiah, who talked to them. Their "prophet" had been lost on the Cross, to be re-embraced as a God after his resurrection. The cause which had gone down in shame and defeat on Calvary, had been more than resurrected by the divine re-animation of their Man-God. Henceforth its scope was, not a Jewish triumph or a Jewish crown, but the conquest of a World and a crown of immortal glory !

Had Jesus passed away as most other executed persons, and as his disciples supposed he had, that little band of women and fishermen would have slipped out of their hiding place as soon as their safety would have permitted, and have returned to Galilee, and would have again been found at their old labors along the shores of the Galilean Sea. As it turned out, however, they became the witnesses of a new faith and the evangelists of a new religion !

One of the most marked and important effects of the supposed resurrection of Jesus, was the new light which, in the minds both of his first and subsequent disciples, it threw back upon all his former life and sayings, and the consequent additions, suppressions and modifications which it produced in our accounts of them. The old familiarity which permitted John to loll upon his breast and Peter to rebuke him, was transmuted into an unquestioning awe of the risen "Son of God." The divine aureola which surrounded the brow of the new Deity threw a new and weird light back upon the events, scenes and discourses of their friend and prophet—over facts which, at the time, had only suggested the query of whether he might not be "John the Baptist" or "Elias," or "that prophet," and the propriety of declaring him King, but had only suggested to the "wise and prudent" the presence of a blasphemer, a seditious agitator, and a dangerous monomaniac. Their imaginations, under this disturbing and distorting light, gave the old facts a divine coloring and new forms and significance, and created facts to fill the outlines of their conception of a divine incarnation. Thenceforth the fragments of Messianic prophe-

cies and their conceptions of the appropriate acts and accompaniments of a Son of God were injected into, and dominated, the actual life of the son of Joseph and Mary. With such persons, acting under such inducements and conditions, such results were natural and inevitable. Just such metamorphoses and mythic *addenda* and adornments grew up around the birth, life and death of Mahomet, Guatama and other founders of religions, as grew up around those of Jesus. If these persons were superhuman, there would have been, (and the desire was that there should have been,) the *accredited concomitants* of the Divine, in their characters and careers. If they were the fulfilments of divine promises and prophecies, they *must* have also been what such promises and prophecies had said they should be. Such has been the course of reasoning: and the traditions and accounts of such men have been made to conform to such desires and beliefs. If we hold up our hands in holy horror at this, we but horrify ourselves at the indubitable course of Nature and the divine method of developing Humanity. This tendency to form *post factum* predictions and opinions, and to clothe our idols with the livery of our ideals, is, indeed, one of the most common and indubitable traits of the human character—even in more common and every-day affairs; and more especially is it exhibited by ignorant and superstitious people.

All truths must be consistent and congruous. In a vague and unconscious way, all people perceive this, and are almost as unconsciously impelled to endeavor to *coerce* the facts upon which they base their beliefs into some kind of accord and consistency with each other, as

well as to *compel* them support the theories or beliefs they are supposed to verify. Our vanity and self-complacency impel us, also, to reconcile our present beliefs and the present facts with our past beliefs—to perform that very common operation of imagining that we always believed and foresaw the facts as they have actually occurred. In short, men habitually tend to force an agreement between their beliefs at different periods, and also between the facts and their beliefs, by either denying their beliefs or remodelling the facts. They adapt the music to instrument, as well as change instruments to suit the music. The traveller who should converse freely with his unknown companion, without perceiving anything remarkable in him, would, upon being informed that he had been conversing with a Bismarck or Napoleon, eagerly review the whole scene, and feel quite sure, not only that there were Napoleonic or Bismarckian traits cropping out everywhere, but that he had actually felt there was something more than common about them, at the time ; and were he to frequently narrate the scene for twenty years, it would insensibly and unconsciously grow more characteristic of those great men as the years went by. The fact is, that men's minds, both consciously and unconsciously, play sad tricks when dealing with the marvellous or supernatural. They seem to “swing loose” or “fly wild” like the needle in presence of a magnet.

This new influence was as prompt as it was potent. Under the very first impulse from its stimulant, Mary

Magdalen could not conceive the wonderful event of the resurrection as being even communicated to her in an ordinary way, but declared that she had seen a "vision of angels" who told her that Jesus was alive. The disciples who conversed long with him on the road to Emmaus, with no hint as to his identity, had no sooner discovered, by his manner of blessing the bread, who he really was, than they forthwith discovered that both of their hearts had actually "burned within them" while he was with them by the way. The Gospel of Matthew (so-called), not content with the Magdalen's "vision of angels," and forgetting that the male disciples had regarded the whole thing as a mere idle tale of the women, has deemed it appropriate to get another earthquake to herald the fact, as it had for announcing his death on the cross, and tells about angels with countenances "like lightning." Thenceforth, all that pertained to Jesus was made to conform, as far as might be, to the new "situation," and as rapidly as was compatible with the laws of mental adaptations. Like the bed of Procrustes, the supposed divinity and Messiahship of the resurrected Jesus clipped or stretched all things to their own dimensions. Being *divine*, he must have had the approved indicia of a marvellous birth and a divine power. Being the *Messiah* of the Jews, he must, of necessity, have fulfilled the signs and had the indicia foretold by Jewish prophecy, and his life must have responded, in some form, to his supposed scriptural or historic types. Unless these indicia accompanied him, how could he be the Messiah and incarnate God? The person and the characteristics and indicia mutually implied each other. But Jesus had been divinely endorsed by the resurrection.

Must not the characteristics and indicia have existed, also, and of necessity? Could any fact be more sacred than this conclusion? Must not all other facts bend into conformity to it?

The influence here insisted upon is sufficiently exemplified by the view taken by Luke of the inability of the disciples to recognize Jesus after walking and conversing with him on the road to Emmaus. Now, How does the gospel account for this? By the natural and only possible way—namely, that he was unrecognizable—that his appearance was changed? Not at all. That would not correspond with his new and conceded character. The Son of God—nay, the incarnate God himself, *could* not be a disguised and escaping convict! What then was left? They *had* not, and, by sight, *could* not recognize their well-known master when talking to him face-to-face :—What *could* they conclude? Simply what they did conclude,—namely, that “their *eyes were holden* that they should *not* know him;”—forgetting that neither their eyes nor their ears were “holden” a few minutes after when they *did* know him by his language and manner at table. And yet the gospel naïvely recites this miraculous and absurd excuse in the same direct and positive manner in which it recites the crucifixion—in a manner which forbids us to doubt that the author actually believed it! Their eyes saw everything perfectly naturally and were perfectly competent to see the man in their usual manner, but they were “holden” from seeing that it was Jesus!—Not a word of explanation. Their eyes must have been “holden” or they would have known him instantly, under any circumstances, and yet

they had not even suspected his identity. Such men were not only capable of all this, but of burning men at the stake for doubting it. These few and immediate instances of the effect of the resurrection and the supposed nature of Jesus are given here merely to exemplify the character and the astounding force of the influence which we have been considering. Do they not strongly confirm our knowledge of human nature and of human history in this regard, and satisfy us that we *must expect* to find many traces of the mythic and unhistoric in the accounts of Jesus given by such men?

CHAPTER VIII.

EXAMPLES OF THE UNHISTORIC AND MYTHIC IN THE
GOSPELS.

THAT we may not seem to cast discredit upon the narratives in the Gospels solely upon general considerations or on principles derived from human history and experience, we shall present some of the more prominent narratives and statements now appearing in our Gospels, that are deemed mythic and unreliable.

Whether these unreliable elements were born of the impulses and beliefs of the first disciples, or were originated afterwards and gradually injected into the traditions or record, is a question of small significance, in determining their true nature and worth, since the same general mental conditions and influences operated on all the early generations of Christian devotees and propagandists. If a century brought changes in the Church, they consisted chiefly in an increase of intelligence and decrease of honesty and of honest materials for forming or correcting opinions. Every age brought its modifications and adaptations. If the first generation had better opportunities for ascertaining the facts, they also had greater ignorance and superstition to misguide them, being more exclusively of the ignorant classes.

That the facts were actually warped and remoulded by both the first and succeeding ages is certain, and it matters little by whom.

We meet with unhistoric elements at the very threshold of our Gospel records,—in their accounts of the genealogy, conception, birth and infancy of Jesus. It is scarcely questionable that the first and third Gospels, in which these accounts appear, were written by persons who were wholly ignorant of the alleged facts concerning which they write, as well as ignorant of the narratives of each other. Neither of them could have been written by an Apostle, as they now stand. There was an absolute reticence among Jesus and his friends, during all his public career, concerning his infancy, relationship and early life. Whatever hints we are given come from charges made by his opponents—charges which Jesus met only with stern silence or total evasion.

We are, indeed, without any reliable knowledge on these subjects,—except, perhaps, as to his parents and their children and family residence. After the resurrection there was a marked change in this singular reticence. Minutely detailed accounts of the alleged marvels attending his birth and infancy grew and multiplied exceedingly: all differing—all absurdly inconsistent. None of these had any legitimate claims to verity over the others, nor was any real investigation or effort ever made to test their comparative historic merits

or to ascertain the true facts, while it was yet possible to have ascertained and determined them. The only test to which they were ever really subjected was their supposed suitabilities to the views and purposes of those who accepted them. Two of them have, in some form, found their way into our Canon, and are to be found prefixed to the first and third Gospels—which for the sake of habit and convenience we may still designate as those of Matthew and Luke.

It would seem morally certain that, had these marvellous evidences of the divine character and mission of Jesus have really existed or have been believed in by the actors in the first drama of Christianity, or even by the recorders of their performances, every page and line of the record would be glowing with proofs of, or references to them. And yet neither Mark nor John even mention, or hints, a word concerning these early and inestimable marvels; and were, evidently, either ignorant of the true early history of Jesus, or regarded it as of no special or favorable significance. Nor do the Gospels now containing them, further refer to them, or show that they were used in demonstration or aid of the claims of Jesus; nor are they elsewhere used in the New Testament. These facts could not have thus existed, if there had been any maintainable or even probable grounds for the assertion of these miraculous and overwhelming evidences attainable by Jesus and his followers. The narratives of the "Nativity" seem to be wholly disconnected fragments prefixed or tacked to independent accounts of the public career of Jesus, and, so far as any connection or use is made of them, they might, barring

the names, have been added excerpts from the legends of some other mythic personage. If we examine all the Gospels, we shall find that they *all*, alike, commence their gospel narratives with the appearance and preaching of John the Baptist, and treat only of the after career of Jesus, if we strike out these two disconnected stories of his genealogy, infancy and childhood of Jesus. In both Matthew and Luke, we find that, after these stories, there is an abrupt and long and disconnected break ; and that, were we to detach this disconnected and discordant affix from each, they would both begin with the advent of John the Baptist, just as Mark and John does. These are certainly very significant facts in determining the character and value of these disconnected *addenda*.

If the fourth Gospel should be correctly attributed to the apostle John, it is not rationally conceivable that he could have been ignorant of such momentous facts, if they had ever existed ; nor that he could, knowing them to have existed, written such a Gospel without reciting or referring to them, nor that he could have been conversant with the accounts in Matthew and Luke without attempting to explain and reconcile their manifest conflicts and inconsistencies, or to redeem the life of his Master from such error and uncertainty, by a true statement of the facts. He had been the constant follower and the bosom friend and pet of his Master up to his crucifixion, and had there accepted from him the care and custodianship of his mother—that mother who of all persons living or dead knew most and best about the paternity, birth and infancy of her son. That John

could have maintained these life-long family relations with a mother and son of such wonderful destiny and miraculous antecedents and still have remained ignorant of those astounding occurrences connected with the "Nativity," is a supposition at war with all human reason and experience. That he could have written his Alexandrian conception of the "Logos" in the obscure and sententious manner he has done in his opening, without ever referring to such marvellous exemplifications and proofs, is equally inconceivable. If he had ever heard of these after-rumors he treated them as Paul did these same "idle genealogies," that is, took "no heed" of them.

Our present accounts of the ancestry, conception, birth and infancy of Jesus seems to have been wholly distinct and unrelated attempts, most probably by subsequent interpolators, to mythically realize, in the infant Jesus, the popular conception of a divine birth (such as we have seen to have been assigned to Plato), as well as the Messianic dreams of the old Jewish Poets and Prophets. When we analyze and compare these accounts, and note the wholly different stand-points of their authors, the difference in their aims and ideals, the conflicts, and the total dissimilarity between the incidents they relate, the different prophecies they rely upon, and the total difference in the supernatural machinery and methods which they summon to their aid, we can scarcely fail to perceive the mythic and unreliable character of both these accounts.

The writer or inventor of the account in the first

Gospel manifestly wrote it from a Jewish stand-point, and mainly to convince Jews that Jesus was their prophesied Messiah and had fulfilled the Messianic prophecies. So thoroughly is the writer absorbed with picturing this prophetic fulfilment, that a real history is never thought of or imitated; and the whole matter is made to consist of dry assertions of certain facts and of certain fragments from the Old Testament scriptures and of their assumed relations to each other:—leaving the *animus* and motive of his plastic labors undisguisedly conspicuous. We are made to perceive, at every step, not only that the meagre narrative is but an attempted reflex of supposed scriptural types and prophecies, but he assures us that the very facts themselves existed to fulfil the prophecies—that “all this was *done* that it *might* be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,” etc. Thus making the Lord set him the example of subordinating the *facts of nature* to *Jewish prophecy*. This is the key-note and secret of the whole affair. He takes certain scraps of supposed Scripture as his *points d'appui*, and boldly asserts some assumed fulfilment of them;—playing, while doing so, most childish tricks with the Scriptures, and still more childish ones in his fulfilments of them.

Naturally, the first of his efforts to meet Jewish requirements, was to show that Jesus was the “Son of David” or heir to their royal house;—since he was, of course, limited to those popular notions of the Christ which did not *necessarily* imply his *earthly triumph*. To satisfy this prophecy, he introduces a genealogy of Jesus—or rather of Joseph, without indicating when, where, or

from whom he obtained it, or where or how its existence or reality could be ascertained or verified. It consists of the bare assertion of an anonymous work by an interested author. So imbued was he, also, with the mystical nature of his work and with the appropriateness of giving it mystical surroundings, that he seizes upon the old fétichistic notion of the magical potency and significance of certain *numbers*—(a notion still common in his day) and endeavors to create the idea of a pre-arranged and divinely ordered harmony resulting in a numerical rhythm in the reproductive energies of all the ancestors of Joseph from Abraham and Sarah on down through over twenty-five generations! He takes special care to divide this long chain of descent into *three* parts of *equal* numbers :—namely : from Abraham to David,—fourteen generations : from David to the Babylonish captivity,—fourteen generations : and from “the captivity” down to Jesus,—fourteen generations. Thus taking the mystic number, three, for his rhythmical periods, and double the mystic and sacred number, seven, for the individuals in each. So that the whole number is attained by multiplying the sacred number “three,” by a multiple of the sacred number “seven.” Such habits were common among ancient writers, and while this custom may explain and apologize for the instance before us, it must also stamp it with the general character and credit of such ancient writings, and will speak “volumes” to the intelligent modern mind as to the origin and value of the work.

But, what is still more conclusive of the forced, inconsiderate and unreliable character of this mystically

arranged genealogy, is the fact that, if we take its own numbers and list of names, we must include both Abraham and David, the first and last names in the first list, in order to make the required fourteen persons ; and so we must include both Solomon and Jeconiah to get the required number in the second period or list ; while even by counting both this same Jeconiah and Jesus in the third period, we fail to get our mystical number—obtaining only thirteen. But the indifference to facts, which inspired this rhythm of mystical numbers, will readily account for such minor carelessness and inaccuracy.

Both St. Jerome and Strauss concur in charging the compiler of this genealogy with having designedly skipped three names in the Old Testament genealogies in order to get his mystical number of double-seven ; and Strauss fully exhibits the facts and substantiates his charge, in his *Life of Jesus*.

Let us now recall some of the differences between the two accounts under consideration. Luke, who had not hit upon this happy thought of a mystical numerical rhythm, makes the number of generations from David to Joseph *forty-one* : while Matthew covers the same ground with only *twenty-six*. To any fair and free mind, it is manifest, at once, that this enormous difference cannot be reconciled with the reliability of the authors of the differing genealogies. The only chance of reconciliation would be in supposing them to be tracing a descent through a different line of ancestors ; and yet, the

existence of such an enormous difference in any two lines of ancestry during the same period and among the same people is most incredible,—even if we had any evidence that the lines attempted to be traced were different.

But this is by no means the most striking difference. The object of these genealogies is the same,—namely, the actual physical descent of Jesus from David, in plain fulfilment of the Jewish prophecies. Had there been, therefore, any real genealogical record of an actual descent of Joseph the carpenter from King David, the Gospel copies from it would have agreed with each other in all corresponding statements; and, were they divinely guided, would have agreed throughout. But, how stand the facts in the record? In the two long lines of alleged ancestors in question, with the exception of two conspicuous persons, *all of the names are different!* Commence at which end of the series you choose, and you will at once meet conflicting statements, and find yourself following two lists of ancestors differing both in number and persons. Both purport to give the genealogy of Joseph the carpenter, one in an ascending, and the other in a descending form. Matthew tells us that Joseph's father was Jacob: Luke tells us that it was Eli. Matthew says that Joseph descended from David through his son Solomon: Luke tells us that it was through his son Nathan. The two series of names only twice unite,—once in Salathiel, and again in Zerubbabel. And, even here they have manifestly only casually stumbled into each other's embrace: since they have no sooner touched than they recoil and sever again; differing as to who

was the father of Salathiel, and as to the son of Zerubbabel. A singular divine inspiration, truly!

All attempts to reconcile these conflicting genealogies have proved as signal failures as they are themselves. Nothing *can* reconcile them. It appears that, even during the life of St. Paul, the churches or church members were wrangling about genealogies, and Paul expressly warns them to pay no heed to those long genealogies,—coupling them with *fables*—(1 Tim. i. 4).

But why this effort to *force* such a worthless pretence of descent and heirship from David as either of these would be, even if true? They both trace the descent through Joseph; and surely it could be of no significance or value to Jesus to trace the descent of *Joseph* from David or anybody else, since such a descent could not possibly transmit either the blood or title of David to Jesus, if the Christian doctrine be true. For it is their fundamental doctrine, put forth in this very first account by Matthew, and found side by side with the genealogy, that Jesus was, not only the Son of God begotten by the Holy Ghost, but the possibility of his being the son of Joseph is specially excluded by the announcement that his mother was yet a virgin when he was born,—never having had matrimonial association with Joseph,—certainly not until after the birth of Jesus: This state of facts would, if true, give Jesus no possible claim to either blood-relationship or heirship through Joseph. And yet, to meet Jewish prophecy and expecta-

tions, he must have been a son of David according to the *flesh*. Paul says he was "made of the *seed* of David according to the *flesh*"—(Rom. i. 3). And singularly enough, after Jesus' own clear renunciation of this claim, the last chapter of Revelations, said to have been written by the "beloved disciple" who was himself present at this renunciation, makes the deified Jesus say of himself—"I am the root and offspring of David." Even if either of these genealogies were true, therefore, it would not even *tend* to establish any descent of Jesus from David, or any such relationship as the scriptures contemplated and the prophecies demanded. Mr. Beecher very correctly remarks that, "since Joseph was *not* his father, it could only be through his mother that he could trace his lineage to David." Having but this *one* human parent, he could only be related to humanity through her. And yet, it is nowhere pretended or hinted that Mary was a descendant of David ;—the only efforts to establish his descent being these two lame and conflicting attempts to establish it *through a man who was in nowise related by blood to himself!*

The character attempted to be set up for Jesus after his resurrection was, in fact, *double* and *incompatible*. If he was directly begotten by God without male human agency, then he *could* not have the relationship to David which the New Testament assigns to him. To make it *sure* that he was the Son of God, they had carefully and expressly excluded the possibility of the fatherhood of Joseph ; but, in doing so, they excluded all possibility of his descent from David save through his mother, and rendered his alleged descent through Joseph utterly nugatory and meaningless.

But more striking evidences of the mythic character of these narratives still remain to be noticed. The conduct as well as declarations of Jesus himself leave no doubt of the light in which he viewed this whole subject of a descent from David. During his entire career he never once put forward any claim to a relationship with David, nor made the slightest allusion to his birth, his early life or his family relations or descent—save to publicly repudiate his relationship to even his mother and brethren. He never hints or acknowledges the necessity of a descent from David to the establishment of his Messiahship, but seems to exult in repudiating all ancestral relations by calling himself the “Son of Man.” Nor did he leave the matter to the violent negative presumption which such a course implied when thus adopted in the presence of a people whose first requisite for a Messiah was a descent from David. On the contrary, we are assured by the Gospels themselves, that Jesus expressly and unanswerably argued to the Jews that they were utterly mistaken in supposing that the Messiah was to be a son of David at all, according to the Scriptures. He utterly silenced them upon this matter, it is said, by showing them from their own scriptures, not only that the Christ *need* not be a son of David, but that *he could not be*, consistently with the divine word. By referring to the 22d chapter of Matthew, and commencing at the 41st verse, we shall see, that Jesus voluntarily introduced the subject and challenged the Jews as to their erroneous notions about the matter. The scene is described in the following language : “ While the Pharisees were gathered together Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ ? Whose *son* is he ? They say unto

him the son of David. He saith unto them, how then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David called him Lord, *how is he his son?* And no man was *able to answer him a word*, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any question." Now, taking this Gospel account of this voluntary challenge of the Jews as to their well-known belief as to the descent of the Christ from David and his confessedly unanswerable overthrow of that belief from the Scriptures themselves, Is it not just a little strange to find future Christians still trying to prove that he was the Christ by showing that he *was* a son or descendant of David through a man who was not his *own* father or ancestor, when Jesus himself had thus stoutly contended and unanswerably *proved* that the Christ *could not be* a son of David!

Besides this express and public exposition of his views to the assembled Pharisees, Jesus, by his whole language and conduct, showed his utter indifference to family relations and pretensions, and was entirely reticent as to his birth, birth-place and parentage:—never speaking of, or visiting Bethlehem,—although often within an hour's walk of it, never speaking of Joseph at all, and never even speaking to Mary as his "mother," but addressing her by her broadest designation—of "woman." If ever a man utterly despised the pretensions of birth and fortune, that man was Jesus of Nazareth. He yearned for success, even to the point of weeping for his failure to win Jerusalem to his cause, but still, they must be won, if at all, in his own way and

for his own purposes and ideals. He knew that the Jews expected their Messiah to be born at Bethlehem and of the House of David, and had he have possessed those popular requisites, it would have been his highest duty and his first care to establish that fact; but it was as impossible for him to make good such royal pretensions as it was humiliating to attempt it. There was but one alternative left: he boldly challenged the popular construction of scripture and contended that the Christ could not be a son of David. So stubbornly did he ignore all claims from birth that, when charged by his opponents, to his face, with being a Samaritan and "possessed of a devil," he only indignantly answered the charge of being "possessed," without noticing that most damning and fatal charge of being a Samaritan, well knowing the necessary implication from his silence under an adverse charge. But, What could he do? He could not, and dared not, claim to have the birth they required, and, Would he make the matter any better by claiming his descent from the humble carpenter of "despised Nazareth?" Were it not wiser to pass it by in silence, and, if possible, let this matter sleep?

Thus, under the highest and most pressing inducements and demands, Jesus, both by his express declarations and his significant silence as well as by the whole tenor and implications of his conduct, not only repudiated all claim to a birth at Bethlehem or a descent from David, but boldly denied the necessity of such descent to his Messianic claims. How is it then, we repeat, that we find the future disciples of Jesus, long after he had passed away, making up all manner of impossible and contradictory genealogies to prove, not only that Jesus

was what he himself had so thoroughly repudiated and publicly denounced as non-Messianic,—but to prove his descent from David through Joseph,—a fact which they themselves had precluded by expressly excluding Joseph from all possible connection with his paternity or descent? Dare we pause as to which of the two we will believe, under all these circumstances,—Jesus, or the unknown writers of these unverified, conflicting and *useless* genealogies of Joseph the carpenter? If these Gospel genealogies are right in saying that Jesus descended — (as St. Paul said—“according to the flesh”) from David through Joseph, then Joseph was his father through the flesh, and he was *not* the Son of God. If Joseph was *not* his father, which they positively assert, then he was *not* a descendant of David, even if they had proved Joseph to have been such. If, however, we override all absurdities and impossibilities, waive all errors and contradictions, and concede to them that Jesus *was* a son of David, then, according to the voluntary and positive showing of Jesus himself, he *could not* be the Christ. Such is the strange jumble in which these “infallible records” have left these fundamental tenets of Christianity! Are not the impressions of the myth-moulds on these genealogies and stories standing out everywhere in bold relief?

The next prophecy which was to be coined into fact is quoted in the Gospel as follows: “A virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call

his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is *God with us.*" We refer again to this prophecy that we may review consecutively all the prophecies alleged to have been fulfilled by Jesus in these Gospel accounts of the Nativity. In view of this prophecy, according to the first Gospel, it was deemed necessary that Mary should have no intercourse with her husband until after the birth of Jesus; and that, in imitation of other extraordinary Jewish persons as well as of the original subject of the prophecy, the child should be pre-named by an anti-natal angelic announcement. This effort of the Evangelist presents two singular and significant features. In the first place there is not the slightest warrant, or even shadow of apology, for applying this prophecy or sign, in Isaiah, to the Messiah. The prophet gives not the slightest intimation or reason to believe that he either directly or typically referred to the Christ. It is apparent, indeed, that no such thought ever occurred to him. The whole prophecy grew out of, and began and ended with, the embroilment of King Ahaz with his enemies—the kings of Israel and Syria. Ahaz was alarmed at his situation, and inclined to make an alliance with the Assyrians. The prophet opposed this view, and endeavored to convince Ahaz that his enemies would speedily come to grief. To assure Ahaz of this he urged him to ask for a sign. Ahaz having declined to do this, the prophet insisted upon having this test of his own views, and named the sign himself—namely: that a virgin should conceive and bear a son whose name should be Emmanuel. The Prophet then adds: "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know

to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings." The prophecy was simply given as a sign to encourage Ahaz, and was to be fulfilled almost immediately. Can any mortal comprehend how this was ever supposed to have any connection with the Christ. The sign had been given, and the little Emmanuel had come and eaten his "butter and honey" to brighten him up on questions of good and evil, and Ahaz and his enemies had slumbered with their fathers, and the whole prophecy and its fulfilment fully over and done with, many centuries before:—What further significance could it have? By what right or reason was it supposed to have any reference to the Messiah, any more than any other future prince or person? Not the slightest reason or apology for such a reference can be shown, or was attempted to be shown.

In the second place, the prophecy was as lamely fulfilled, as it was lamely applied by the Evangelist. He not only as clearly *forces* the "sign" upon us as did the prophet upon Ahaz, but he utterly fails to rival the prophet in the success of his alleged fulfilment. His reasoning is by no means a model of perspicuity. He conceived that, because the child given as a sign to Ahaz was to be called Emmanuel,—which means *one certain thing*, and was to thereby fulfil the prophecy, therefore the child of Mary fulfilled the same prophecy by being called *Jesus*,—a name wholly *different* and of wholly *different signification* from that used in the prophecy! This is gravely said to be fulfilling the prophecy, but just *how* it fulfils it, or what it had to *do* with the prophecy, is nowhere made apparent. As to

the virginity of the mothers of the little "butter and honey" eater and his asserted antitype, like in all other such cases, it is a matter to be smiled at. What would such stories and such attempts at prophetic fulfilments be worth in our day? and, are they any better for being old? As long as Jesus and his mother personally figure before us we have no intimation of the virginity of his mother or of her marvellous association with the Holy Ghost, either by word or conduct. These stories all grew up after the Resurrection.

The next prophecy which our author proposes to fulfil, is that of Balaam concerning the "star" which should arise *out of Jacob*. The attempt to apply this prophecy to the Messiah, much more to Jesus, was, if possible, more gratuitous and unwarranted than this appropriation of the Emmanuel-prophecy. Let any free mind read the 22d, 23d and 24th chapters of Numbers and ask itself whether, if it were not aware that it had been used in connection with the Christ, it would have ever dreamed of giving it such an application. None can fail to perceive that the "star" was intended to represent some descendant of Jacob whom the prophet distinguished as a star—that is, in vulgar parlance, a "star person," and not a heavenly orb or star. The prophecy plainly and expressly refers to a future powerful and successful Ruler of the Israelites, who should triumph over Moab and the petty states around Judea. The Reader will find the *military exploits* of this prophesied

"Star" very fully detailed in Numbers xxiv. 17-24. Can any such achievements as are there predicted of the "Star" find any analogy in those of Jesus? Or is there any analogy between that "star" or person and the wandering "star" in the Heavens, which is claimed to have piloted the "three wise men from the East" to the cradle of Jesus? Can even a pretence be shown for using the star of the prophecy as pointing to or prefiguring a heavenly body or light? How *could such* a star arise *out of Jacob?*

The nature of Matthew's star has vainly exhausted speculation. It has been supposed to have been a conjunction of planets, a comet, a meteor, and whatever else could be suggested by despairing ingenuity. This difficulty arises, not from the prophecy, but from the Evangelist's, or his interpolater's, construction and fulfilment of it. Balaam is made to predict, in the figurative language of the East, the coming of an able and powerful person among the descendants of Jacob, and the writer of the account in Matthew probably had heard of this "star" of prophecy, and without ever having examined its true meaning, assumed it to be literally one of the heavenly luminaries and to be connected with the Christ. His utter ignorance of the real nature and distance of the heavenly bodies permitted him to assign to this star offices and capabilities which are now known to be impossible to them. As well assert that our Earth could go before a man and point out a hen's nest on the planet Jupiter, as to say that one of the planetary worlds or stars could point out the road to, and the dwelling house of, the infant Jesus. Supposing the stars to be

merely small lights in the blue vault just overhead—(instead of vast worlds many millions of miles distant,) he tells us that the star of Jesus guided the “Wise Men” to Bethlehem and then came and “stood over” where the young child was, to point out his exact locality—a fact that might have been performed by a divinely inspired Jack-o’-lantern, but surely not by any heavenly body.

Mr. Beecher, conceding the impossibility of its having been a star, planet or comet, adopts the Jack-o’-lantern theory, and suggests the possibility of a special globe of light, *ordered for that purpose*; and, to avoid the inevitable inference that Herod and other people would also see it, he supposes the eyes of the “Wise Men” to have been miraculously “*prepared to receive it*.” Well, this is clearly not at all what the Gospel means, but it is useless to quarrel with Mr. Beecher for suggesting a baby-solution of this childish affair, where the only other alternatives are impossible ones. He will suffer us, however, to put him in the line of safe precedents, by suggesting that, instead of having his men’s eyes miraculously *opened*, he should have had other people’s eyes “holden,” after the style of the disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus. But, really and seriously, when men, so clever and cultured as Mr. Beecher, can consent to accept a miracle which is, even as a miracle, so palpably absurd and so alien to the prophecy, by *forcing such* a construction of his own upon it,—Ought we to wonder at the credulity and constructions of the ignorant and superstitious men whose writings we are considering? Does Mr. Beecher also

believe that Balaam had reference to a ball of light or some miraculous "bull's-eye lantern" when he spoke of the star that should rise *out of Jacob*? Or can he really believe that either the Gospel or the "wise men" could mean such a light as he suggests, when these "wise men" are made to come from the East and say: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen *his* star in *the East*?"

The next attempted adaptation in our narrative, was an effort to get the benefit of a couple of supposed prophecies and a scriptural prototype. We are told that Herod the Great being alarmed by the announcement of the "wise men" from the East and disappointed by their failure to return by Jerusalem with the information he desired concerning the young heir of David and rival for his own throne, ordered all the infants under two years of age in and around Bethlehem to be slaughtered; but that Joseph, being warned in a *dream*, escaped with the mother and child into Egypt. It would not do for this new redeemer of Israel to pass through less dangers and marvellous escapes on account of the terror his very existence inspired in the reigning monarch, than did their first redeemer, Moses. By all means he must be made an antitype of Moses, who had been similarly threatened, and as marvellously preserved from a like destruction of infants by Pharaoh.

One of the supposed prophecies here alleged to

have been fulfilled, will be found in Jeremiah, xxxi. 15, in the following words: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping: Rachel weeping for her children because they were not." The other is a partially quoted paragraph in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Hosea—"Out of Egypt have I called my son." These are not less astounding attempts to transform mere casual statements and references in the Scriptures into prophecies, nor are we given less astonishing and forced fulfilments of them, than in those already considered. The facts which are set up in fulfilment of these Scriptures, override all the canons of belief. That Herod might have been mentally morbid is very possible, but it is certainly true that his sagacity and conduct had won for him the appellation of Herod the Great, and that, up to the last, he was both shrewd and cunning. It is quite impossible to rationally suppose him capable of the follies thus attributed to him, even were he known to be capable of such barbarity. Nor can we believe that Josephus, who enters into even the royal dreams of that age, could have been either ignorant or silent upon such an event as this "slaughter of the innocents" with a view to the destruction of the Christ of the Jews. We find it impossible to conceive him overlooking so appalling a crime and one committed for the purpose of destroying the long cherished and last hope of himself and of his race. It would have needed no such wholesale slaughter to have aroused the Jews in this instance. Had there really been such a public and star-inspired announcement in Jerusalem of the birth of the Christ by the "wise men of the East," the bare annunciation would have set all Judea ablaze in twenty-

four hours, and the merest threat or suspicion of an attempt to destroy that *one* infant, would have maddened to desperation the entire race. And yet we are to believe that all this was actually done, that *all Jerusalem* was "troubled" on account of this public announcement of the Magi; that all the children under two years of age both in Bethlehem and throughout "all the *coasts* thereof" were ruthlessly butchered in order to destroy their infant Christ; and that all this, not only brought no resistance—no protest even—from the Jews or even from the outraged parents of Bethlehem and its "*coasts*," but that the whole matter passed into an utter, Lethean oblivion with the dream and flight of Joseph! Would such an announcement of, and such an attempt to destroy their Messiah have thus passed into oblivion? Were the "troubled" Jews of "all Jerusalem" either the people, or in the temper and mood to submit to such outrages? Would Bethlehem and its "*coasts*" have drawn no sword in defence of their little ones?

Besides all this, under the conditions propounded Herod could not have acted so unnecessarily brutal or been so fatally foolish. With his knowledge and the resources at his command—Where was the *need* for such brutality or for such an *uncertain* and dangerous remedy and one taken, as it appears, without ever even inquiring for, or seeking the child? If there could be any difficulty in finding such a child in the adjacent village of Bethlehem, why not have followed the "star;" or were that invisible to ordinary mortals, as Mr. Beecher suggests, why not put his spies on the track of the "wise men," and had them watched in Bethlehem, where he

knew they were going expressly to see this young Christ? There could have been no difficulty in following, or in afterwards tracing the movements of these venerable, star-gazing strangers, with their load of costly presents for the Jewish Christ, especially through such a small village as Bethlehem and within an hour's walk of Jerusalem. Would the wily old Idumean Herod have failed to perceive this simplest and plainest method, and have trusted wholly to the men who had come to *worship* this divine child and heir to Herod's usurped throne, for information which they were sure to, and did refuse to furnish? Would he, after their failure to return, have resorted to the uncertain and brutal remedy asserted, without an effort to find the child or to follow the necessarily slow flight of the "holy family" even through his own dominions? But, when we add, from Luke's description, all the heavenly glories, and signs that marked the birth and pointed out the place of the child, the proclaiming it "abroad" by the shepherds, the open and public dedication of the child to God, in the temple, under the very beards of Herod and all his officers, his recognition as Messiah by prophets and priest amid the general rejoicings in the temple over his advent, and his public annunciation as the Christ to all those that "looked for redemption in Jerusalem,"—when we add all this, we say, can we believe that Herod was put to such silly, uncertain and brutal straits from his inability to find this infant? Do they not assure us that he was proclaimed openly and miraculously in heaven and on earth, in the temple and city, in villages and fields, by angels, prophets, priests and peasants? Was ever a child so heralded to Herod and to all the

people as was this one? Was he not, of all children, the easiest to be found? Need we wonder, when we read such exhibitions of divine congruity and consistency, that this same inspired author was the very first to discover that the little far-inland, hill village of Bethlehem was a *seaport* town, having "all the *coasts* thereof?"

As to the supposed prophecy about the mourning in Ramah (Jer. xxxi. 15), it may be safely affirmed that they do not purport to be, and were never intended to be, a prophecy at all. The paragraph in question is a mere reference to a fact which had already happened—happened when the Assyrians had destroyed or made captive the people of Ramah. That it furnishes the remotest hint that it refers, in any manner, to the Christ is simply not true. The prophet had been discoursing, hopefully, of the restoration of Israel from their Babylonish captivity, and, after mentioning the *past fact* of the lamentations in Ramah at the time of their subjugation, by way of prelude, he then commands them (v. 16 and 17), in the name of God, to "refrain thy (their) voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy *children shall come again to their own border.*" The losses and lamentations in Ramah are here alluded to as past facts: the prophetic part concerns the return of the Israelites from Babylon to Judea,—and that alone. How this recital of the *past* woes of *Ramah* could be construed to predict the asserted woes of *Bethlehem* happening many centuries *afterwards*, is quite beyond all rational comprehension.

Another scriptural quotation seems to have lingered in the mind of the author, concerning "my son," which impressed him as available. The sentence was imperfectly and only partially remembered, and is quoted thus:—"Out of Egypt have I called my son." The words thus imperfectly remembered are from Hosea—(xi. 1 and are as follows:—"When *Israel* was a *child*, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." When the text is no longer mutilated, its meaning is no longer pervertible. The words were not prophetic, nor do they, or their connection, hint of a prophetic significance, or permit such a construction. Hosea was lecturing the Jews for ingratitude to Jehovah, after all he had done for them, and commences the recital of his favors to them by saying that, from the first, when Israel was a child, as it were, God loved him, and had brought him—(his son Israel)—out of Egypt. It was simply a reminder of the fact that God had long ago brought the Israelites out of Egypt,—and nothing more; and, when read entire and in its proper connection, is incapable of misconstruction. As partially and imperfectly remembered and quoted by our author, it was seized upon as a Messianic prophecy: it was then no longer "my son" *Israel* that *had* come out of Egypt, but "my son"—the *Christ*,—that *should* come out of Egypt! Can any one inform us by what right men thus garble and misquote, and then wholly pervert the palpable meaning of Scripture? Is it not clear that *any* statement of a past fact about *any* body, in the Scriptures, can with equal propriety be asserted to be prophecy or typification of the Christ. With equal propriety and plausibility they might have said that, according to Scripture, Adam came out

of the garden of Eden, and that, to fulfil this Scripture, the Christ must come out of Eden also.

Having so lucidly and legitimately shown that the Christ was to be brought out of Egypt, the question naturally arose as to how he could be gotten *out*, until he had been gotten *in*. It was deemed necessary to have him born in Bethlehem, and it was no easy matter to suggest a plausible reason for a poor man, in those days, moving with his wife and infant child from Judea to Egypt and then back again ; and, if the idea of having him scared into a temporary flight by a dream of danger to the child from Herod's jealousy should seem far-fetched and irrational, we can make allowances for the difficulties of the situation ; and when we find that Luke finds no need for, and makes no mention of, the "star," of the "wise men," of Herod's slaughter of the innocents, of the flight into Egypt, or of bringing "my son" out of Egypt, but clearly excludes their possibility by his own conception of the necessities and proprieties of the situation, we can still make allowances, considering both the source and purpose, as well as the fact that the author did not know what Luke was going to say about the matter. Fortunately the troubles on this point go no further, since, having gotten him *into* Egypt he could readily be brought *out* again ; and, with the exception of Joseph's dreams and the apocryphal miracles worked by the swaddling clothes, etc., of Herod's infant rival, that was all that came of it. The whole object was to get him *in*, so as to get him *out*. But, as Matthew assumes their residence to have been Bethlehem of Judea, it was necessary to find some reason for their having gone to

Nazareth in Galilee, instead of back to Bethlehem. To accomplish this, a new "scare" and a new "dream" are resorted to. At the return, a son of Herod ruled in Judea, and to avoid danger from him, they turned aside and moved into Galilee;—the author being ignorant of, or overlooking, the fact that the same man who afterwards executed John the Baptist, then ruled in Galilee and was also a son of Herod and a contestant with his brother for the throne of Judea: forgetting, also, how utterly ignorant of, and indifferent to, the pretensions of Jesus, were the family of Herod, as shown by the whole course of the examination, and of the contemptuous acquittal of Jesus by this same son of Herod when he was sent to him by Pilate upon a charge of having actually and publicly proclaimed himself King of the Jews. This trial by Herod Antipas and the fact that Jesus' chief exhibitions and pretensions had been put forward in Herod's own province, without Herod's molestation, will give us some idea both of the pretended knowledge and of the fears of old Herod and his sons of the infant Jesus, and of the probability of the "slaughter of the innocents," and the counter-fears and movements of the dreaming Joseph.

The narrative woven to fulfil these odd and disjointed scraps of alleged Scripture, lands us safe in Nazareth. But we should fail to do justice to the creative powers of the author if we supposed that he could part with this masterpiece without a final and triumphant attempt to a

fulfilled prophecy. The final home of Jesus must surely have had some scriptural significance which would furnish the author with a parting Parthian shot. We are accordingly assured that Joseph, with Jesus and his mother, came and dwelt in Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets—"he shall be called a Nazarene." Here we have, certainly, a very apt prophetic ending; but, also, unfortunately, a very characteristic one. Hitherto our author had contented himself with a single prophet for each point, and with misappropriating, misstating, misconstruing and misfulfilling each in its turn, but, in this final climax of his plastic labors, he attempts to aggregate and appropriate the prophetic authority of all the prophets, at a single dash, by fulfilling for us a prediction claimed to be made by the "prophets" generally. This reference to the prophets generally was certainly a judicious stroke, seeing that no such prophecy, nor even the word "Nazarene," is mentioned within the lids of the Old Testament! This aptly closes our prophetic assurances of the Messiahship of Jesus.

Let us now compare the accounts of the Nativity as they are found in the first and third Gospels. Accustomed as we have been from our childhood to be told that these stories relate to the same child, and to regard both accounts as the infallible "word of God," we never notice their palpable and radical differences. We dare

not suffer such suggestions to enter our minds. Yet did we once dare to give our reason the freedom of its own laws, we should readily discover that, had all the proper names been left in blank, the identity of the subjects of the two narratives could never have been suspected. Both narratives have evidently been written by men without mental grasp or acumen, or even the culture of their times. They are both ignorant men, writing for an ignorant sect. Both are credulous and superstitious; both write for specific readers and specific purposes; and both are equally indifferent to the sacredness of history. But the persons they severally intended to affect as well as the moulds and habits of their own minds and thoughts are clearly different. The writer of the account prefixed to the first Gospel was evidently writing to convince those who looked to the Jewish Scriptures for their tests of the Messiahship of Jesus, and his narrative consists of a loose skeleton formed of the alleged fulfilments of disjointed scraps of misquoted and misapplied Scripture which we have reviewed, held together by meagre and marvellous shreds of dreams and events concocted to connect the incidents claimed to be fulfilments of such scraps of Scripture.

The account in the third Gospel, on the contrary, would seem to have been written by one Gentile to another, to satisfy him as to the fact that Jesus was the divine *Saviour of the World*, and to give him the current and most popular views in regard to him. His fancy, consequently, has a different and freer range and his mental products a different mould. To the Jew, Jesus was nothing unless he could be shown to be the Jewish Messiah; while by the Greek and Roman he was toler-

ated as a Jew in consideration that he was also the Saviour of Humanity. The Gentile writer, consequently, while accepting certain general traditionary facts or fancies which were supposed to identify him with the Jewish Christ, does not dole out his meagre, but steady string of scriptural scraps, like the writer for the Jews. His mental conception of the birth of Jesus is that of the advent of a Greek God, rather than the birth of a prophet-hoped heir to the royal line of Judea. The converted Polytheist abandons the unpoetic machinery of "dreams" to the Jew, and calls to his aid the members of a Triune Deity and of the Archangelic host, and illuminates every phase of his narrative with the sheen of angels' wings. To the Jew, the lamest pretence of a "sign" was a matter to arrest instant attention; while to have a star-guided deputation from the wise, star-reading Magi of their ancestral Chaldea, was of most solemn moment. That the Magian astrologers could read the stars, and that Joseph's dreams were from God they could devoutly believe. Such machinery and evidences, however, lost their charm when used with men who had never heard or read a Jewish prophecy, nor ever expected a "sign," and many of whom had never heard of the Magi. To a Gentile, a nativity heralded by a gorgeous array of angels, a grand overture from the Heavenly choir, an annunciation from the Premier of the Heavenly host, the mysterious "overshadowing" of the Virgin by the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous annunciation of the mysterious union of the divine and human natures in the resulting Man-God, were infinitely more acceptable and effective; since all the features and flesh-marks of such a conception found appropriate

prototypes or analogues in their own native myths and legends. Mr. Beecher touches the true spirit which inspired this account, when he says that these "angelic ministrations" would "greatly facilitate among the Greeks the reception of Monotheism"—furnishing these Polytheistic people "an *easy transition*" from their old religion to Christianity. Thus, we find our second narrative of the Nativity formed in the Hellenic, rather than in the Hebraic mould.

Let us note further and more specifically the differences and conflicts between these two accounts of the same series of events. The decisive importance of this will be manifest when we remember that we are called upon to believe and treat them as inspired and infallible records of the actual facts. If they are such, they should agree. If we find they do *not* agree, then we shall understand the value of such inspiration and infallibility—nay, their value even as mere historic evidence.

After the general differences mentioned, we are perhaps first struck by the fact that Matthew, nowhere in his whole account, presents us with a real visible or audible angel, but supplies his limited demand for supernatural intervention by the *dreams* of the "wise men" and of the aged carpenter, Joseph. Dreams answer all his purposes. Luke, on the other hand, flourishes an angel as promptly and as often as Matthew enlists a dream or forces a text of scripture; and these different agencies and methods are conflictingly used for identical incidents and purposes. Luke's account also appears to be

more congruous and artistic than Matthew's, and shows greater regard to the "proprieties." Matthew permits the poor Virgin to become *enciente* without her knowledge, and to stand dumb and defenceless before her betrothed husband. She is simply "found with child." She is nowhere represented as speaking, or as being spoken to, during all that wonderful drama of the divine incarnation and her own apparently humiliating condition. The first and only announcement of her innocence and true condition is made to Joseph in a dream, and from that on the whole matter is carried on through Joseph and his dreams,—Mary being a "dummy" throughout. Luke, on the contrary, makes Mary figure, almost exclusively, from first to last; while Joseph is permitted to take no part save as a silent attendant—is not even permitted to dream once. Matthew having determined to get the child into Egypt and adopted the method of driving Joseph thither to conceal the child from Herod, was, of course, unable to have the child taken to the Temple, under the very nose of Herod, to have him dedicated to the Lord as the law directed. He consequently hurries Joseph into a precipitate flight by night into Egypt. Luke, on the contrary, does not seem to have understood that any prophecy required the Messiah to come out of Egypt, and does not permit him to go there at all. And knowing of no such demand for going into Egypt or for avoiding Herod as Matthew tells us of, he never hears (as being among "those things most surely believed" among Christians) of the coming of the "wise men" or of their wonderful doings or of the wonderful "star"—never heard of Herod's council, his fears, his slaughter of the innocents, etc. No, he had heard of no such occur-

rences, dangers and fears preliminary to sending the child into Egypt, and, consequently and in lieu of all this, has the child proclaimed in the open Heavens, heralded abroad by the Shepherds, has him duly circumcised on the seventh day, and on the fortieth day has him taken to the Temple and publicly dedicated to the Lord, amid much prophetic recognition of him as the Christ, of rejoicings over him by the Faithful, and proclamations of his advent to all that were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. And, no sooner has he put him through all these lawful as well as marvellous and public processes, than he has him *forthwith* started to Nazareth (in an opposite direction from Egypt), where he is silently permitted to remain until his fourteenth year.

But Matthew has his revenge for these slights and contradictions. All those wonderful proceedings and speeches between the angel Gabriel and Mary in Nazareth, the visit of Mary from Nazareth to the mother of John the Baptist and the wonderful chantings and miracles thereupon occurring, the Roman taxation, the trip of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and the consequent birth in a manger under the heavenly displays of the angels and the rejoicings of the shepherds, and the whole scenes at the temple at the time of the dedication are not only ignored by Matthew, but are in effect denied and repudiated. Both Gospels place the birth at Bethlehem, although under very different circumstances. Matthew treats Bethlehem as the proper residence of Joseph and Mary, and gives a special reason for their turning aside from their Judean home, on their return from Egypt, and moving to Nazareth; and he tells us

that this removal to Nazareth was also to fulfil a prophecy that Jesus was to be called a "Nazarene." Matthew had no need, therefore, for getting Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem—from where they had never lived to their ordinary home, or for supposing or referring to occurrences at Nazareth or visits from Nazareth or the trip from Nazareth or the tax which caused it or any of the miracles and wonders accompanying or resulting from them, and therefore ignores and excludes them. Luke, on the contrary, conceives them as residing at Nazareth from the first, and returns them to that place as soon as the temporary purposes are subserved by their trip to Bethlehem. The movement of the two accounts are, indeed, as different as their agencies and incidents. Matthew commences with them as citizens of Bethlehem, and moves them first to Egypt, and then Nazareth. Luke commences with them as residents of Nazareth; then, for special cause, takes them to Bethlehem; and then returns them direct to Nazareth, without ever sending them to Egypt at all. The reason assigned by Luke for their trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, seems, in every way, to have been a hasty and unfortunate one. He tells us that *when Cyrenius* was governor of Syria, Cæsar Augustus ordered a taxation of the whole world; that all went to their *own cities* to be taxed; and that Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem to be taxed "*because* he was of the *house and lineage* of David." There is an inconsistency in the cause here assigned even by his own showing, for the fact that David had once lived at Bethlehem certainly did not make it the "own city" of his descendants who lived elsewhere, throughout all time.

But the first and most prominent difficulty is with the tax itself. Josephus, who gives us a very minute history of this period, tells us of Cyrenius being sent as judge over Syria, including Judea, and of his being ordered to take an account of the substance of the people, and of his coming into Judea for that purpose with his subordinate officer Coponius as procurator of Judea. But this was the *only* tax of the kind mentioned by him, and this occurred ten years after the death of Herod the Great (under whom Jesus was born) and after the banishment of his son Archelaus. This was, in fact, the point of time at which Judea was first reduced to a simple Roman province, and this Coponius was its first Roman procurator. And this was, not only the first known tax under Cyrenius, but this was also his first appointment to this Syrian office : since, not only has no account of any previous appointment come down to us, but Josephus takes care to mention his former positions and dignities, and would certainly not have omitted so exalted a one as governor of Syria. But what renders this matter morally certain is the fact, that this was the first time the Roman Emperor was in a condition to tax Judea. During the reign of Herod the Great, with which we are alone concerned, since it was then that Jesus was born, Judea was only a subject *kingdom* of Rome. Herod collected his own taxes and expended them at his pleasure, and he alone had the right to do so. He merely made presents, or, at most, paid tribute, to the Emperor of Rome. And, so soon as the country was reduced to a mere province, we find the taxing power at once assumed ; but never before that time. An attempt to have directly taxed Herod's subjects would have been

equivalent to dethroning him—to reducing him to the rank and position of a Roman officer ; and no such attempt could have been made without producing results which would have found their way into history. Beyond question Josephus would have mentioned so great a change. Even after the kingdom *was* abolished and the taxing power assumed, ten years after the death of Herod, this taxing power was continually questioned and opposed ; and never ceased to breed commotions among the people until the final fall of Jerusalem. It was, indeed, one of the charges against Jesus, that he opposed the tribute to Cæsar. It appears manifest then, that Rome neither had, nor attempted to exercise, the right of taxing the people of Judea until it was reduced to a province ; and that Cyrenius was the first to make an assessment for that purpose, some ten years after the death of Herod and therefore long after the birth of Jesus. It will, at once, be seen, therefore, how unfortunate Luke was in selecting, or how misinformed in adopting, this tax under Cyrenius as an excuse or reason for Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, happening many years before. But even this assumption of a cause which was long subsequent to alleged effect, is not the only defect in this conception. We are told that the movement to Bethlehem was required because *Joseph* was of the *house* or *lineage* of David. This is the express and *sole* cause assigned. There is no hint of Mary being involved in this cause : such an inference is excluded, indeed, by the mode of statement ; nor are we at liberty to assume a cause when a cause is given. Now, laying aside the fact, already mentioned, that this necessity did not arise, even with Joseph, by the declared

requirements of going to his "own city," What was there to require, or even to apologize for, the compelling of that young and expectant mother to ride through almost the entire length of Palestine when her accouchment was so imminent? Where was the necessity for so cruel and dangerous an experiment? Mary was in no sense *compelled* to go, even if Joseph went, by Luke's own showing. But might not Mary herself have had an estate at Bethlehem? While we are precluded from this assumption by an expressed cause, and while mere unfounded suggestions of *possible* but unsupported facts, such as this, cannot be allowed consideration in the original establishment of another fact, (however legitimate in an attempted explanation of a known, but obscure or mysterious one,) this particular suggestion *needs* no such general exclusion; since it is not only without support, but is at war with the Gospel statements and facts. We are not left to speculation for the cause of the movement. It was not an estate of any body, anywhere, that compelled it, but the "lineage" of *Joseph*. *This* is the cause assigned by the Gospel, and by this cause it must be judged. But even waiving this direct refutation, will any Gospel reader believe that the mother of Jesus was a landed heiress? Or that, having real estate in Bethlehem, she would have been driven to a stable for her accouchment? For all other purposes, indeed, Is not the extreme poverty of the "Holy Family" conceded by all, and proved by the entire tenor of the Gospels? But, even allowing that such a suggestion were possible, would the fact have been even a reason, much less produced a necessity, for Mary's going in person to have it assessed? Is not a man as compe-

tent to do that, alone, as with his wife? And, even if Mary were compelled to personally attend to her own taxation, was she not compelled by the terms of the decree to do so in her "own city?" Or will it be denied that Luke makes her "own city" Nazareth?

When we review all the considerations showing that the taxation *expressly referred to*, and the only taxation of the kind which *could* have occurred up to that time, was not decreed until more than ten years after the birth of Jesus, and those showing that even Joseph, much less Mary, were not only under no possible compulsion to go to Bethlehem, but that by the very requirements of the decree, as stated by Luke himself, their proper place of attendance for assessment was in their "own city" of Nazareth, and not in some distant city or village resided in by some remote ancestor of one of them,—when we review all these considerations, we say, What but sheer blindness can prevent us from perceiving that the traditions and beliefs which Luke professes to give were unfounded in fact as to this Roman taxation and consequent trip to Bethlehem; and that Matthew did well in disregarding and repudiating the whole story with its dependant miracles and birth in a manger? For this story of the taxation and this trip to Bethlehem is the back-bone upon which the entire story of Luke is built, and, if it be stripped from it, the entire fabric falls to the ground, with all its glittering adornments; and Matthew stands justified in repudiating the conceptions, or the rumors and traditions of which it was built up by Luke.

Thus we find that our assertion as to the errors, the inconsistencies and the mutual contradictions of these Gospel accounts, has been made good upon this brief review of the facts. And I cannot but think, that any fair and free mind, upon a review of the whole facts concerning the conflicting and useless genealogies we have considered, and the two singularly defective and markedly dissimilar and contradictory accounts of the birth and infancy of Jesus which accompany them, must come to the conclusion that both these marvellous accounts are unhistoric ;—that they are the natural outgrowths of all such supernatural religions—the mythic and legendary mouldings and adornments which embody and express the prevalent ideals, conceptions and longings of all developing peoples at their then stage of development, as specialized and modified by the special and actually existing influences, needs and conditions. Is it not derogatory to our civilization and manhood to be compelled to confess that we *dare not* accept them *as such*, when we know so well that we would unhesitatingly denounce them as such were they found, letter for letter and fact for fact, in any other sacred books except our own ?

CHAPTER IX.

EXAMPLES OF THE UNHISTORIC AND MYTHIC IN THE
GOSPELS—CONTINUED.

HAVING briefly considered the more palpable errors, inconsistencies and conflicts in the two narratives detailing the early prophetic and miraculous evidences of the claims set up for Jesus, let us, then, after first taking a fair and rational view of his actual and true relations to the Jewish prophecies, further consider these alleged miraculous evidences, not in their recitals, but in their *effects*. Let us inquire whether the effects which they would naturally and even necessarily have produced on the lives, conduct and declarations of the parties concerned and conversant with such marvellous facts and relations, actually did result and were manifested in this instance. If they actually existed, the persons who knew or were informed of them would have thought, spoke and acted *as if* they had existed. And if the persons who were so cognizant of these asserted facts did *not* act in conformity with such a knowledge on their part, it raises a violent presumption against the existence of the facts themselves; and if it should further appear, that the recorded conduct, acts and declarations of *all* the persons so concerned or conversant with the alleged

facts, were inconsistent with, or in contradiction of such knowledge and relations on their part, then such a state of facts will be conclusive proof of the non-existence of such miraculous relations and evidences, and of their subsequent fabrication ; unless, indeed, there could be affirmatively shown sufficient reasons or motives operating upon each and all of them for such reticence and contradictory conduct. None who are at all familiar with the laws of human conduct and with the nature and value of presumptive evidence, will question these positions.

If the decision on either of these points be unfavorable, it is fatal to the asserted claims of Jesus, and will show that Christianity was not the creation of the Jewish Christ, but has itself been the creator of its own Christ by its mythic remodellings of Jesus. In the first place, it is undeniable that, if Jesus did not, in good faith, really fulfil the Messianic prophecies, he was, to say the least of it, *a mistake*. And if, in the second place, the habitual life, actions, conversations and mutual relations of all the actors in the drama of Jesus, contradict the divine and Messianic nature and relations set up for Jesus in the narratives of his conception, birth, infancy, etc., then those accounts must be considered, not only as un-historic, but as fatal to his claims.

We have seen the kind of attempts made in the Gospels to get scriptural phrases which could, by any possibility, be claimed as having found a fulfilment in the person and life of Jesus. It must be specially noted in this connection that these attempts were made long after

the public failure and execution of Jesus, and were therefore limited and controlled by those undoubted facts. They were confined to such scriptures as were, at least, not palpably inconsistent, as they supposed, with the more prominent and notorious facts of his public life. An attempt at so much consistency might be expected, even from tradition-mongers. Jesus could not, after his humiliating defeat and crucifixion, be claimed to have been the triumphant Jewish Messiah and kingly successor of David. His public life having been a known failure, those who knew anything of him or the prophecies were compelled to ignore all this in their efforts to satisfy prophecy. Hence it is, that we find all the divine glories and the miraculous triumphs and attestations which were witnessed by disinterested parties, clustering around the unknown conception and infancy of Jesus, or figuring in the dreams of venerable carpenters and astrol-ogers, who, if they ever existed, had long since passed beyond human reach ; while his entire youth and early manhood, which could still have been verified by the Nazarenes, is left an utter void, save by one single contemptuous reference to their knowledge of it ; and the consequent rejection of his pretensions by his indignant neighbors, and an account of a single visit to Jerusalem at the age of fourteen.

The most striking evidence, however, of the effect of these influences upon the minds of the writers of these accounts, is to be found in the marked difference between the scraps of scripture, or pretended scripture, and fulfilments which they were compelled to resort to when the actual fulfilment of them was to be immediately

pointed out in the *past* facts, and those scriptures and fulfilments which, at the time of their second divine announcement, still existed *in futuro* and in *promise*. We have seen how they avoided those portions of his life which were the more ascertainable, and how they were driven to petty garblings and perversions of scraps of scripture when writing for the Jews, who knew something of the prophecies and of the residence and life of Jesus. Let us now turn to Luke, who writes for the Gentile mind—a mind ignorant and out of reach of all that appertained to Jesus personally, and also unfamiliar with Jewish prophecy. We find Luke utterly ignoring Matthew's fragments and fulfilments, and boldly dashing off into facts and events in and around Jerusalem, which no citizen of Jerusalem could be induced to credit. He was not picking out scraps of scripture or fitting them to facts before a critical audience: he was describing the incarnation and birth of a God, and proclaiming the advent of the Jewish Messiah; and, in proclaiming what that Messiah was and was to become, he forgot the actual life of Jesus, and proclaimed the arrival of the triumphant son of David, for whom the Jews were really looking. He introduces the Archangel Gabriel to recite the prologue, or programme, of the Messianic drama—a drama then still to be performed, and therefore unhampered by ugly facts or critical observers. Thus untrammelled, Gabriel is made to give the free action of the author's mind, and to announce the true Messiah of the Jews, and not the actual Jesus—is made to announce a Messianic programme which would have satisfied the strictest Scribe or Pharisee, but which found no pretence of a fulfilment in the actual life of Jesus. Turn now to

the first chapter of the third Gospel, and hear Gabriel's announcement:—"Hail [Mary] thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. * * Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be *great*, and be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the *throne* of his *father David*, and he shall *reign* over the *house of Jacob* forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Here, beyond all power of misconstruction, we have the true triumphant and "anointed" prince,—that is, "the Christ" of the house of David who was to restore the royalty and dominion of his house and secure the triumph of Israel,—actually announced by Gabriel in the person of Jesus. This expected or announced child of Mary, according to Gabriel, was to be that triumphant descendant and kingly successor of the royal David, whom the same prophecies declare should, not only redeem and finally establish Israel, but should himself receive the homage of the princes of the earth, and make the City of Jerusalem the centre of earthly power, intelligence and beneficence.

How do we find the real facts as to the fulfilment by Jesus of this Gabrielic and prophetic programme? It unfortunately appears, that Jesus did *not* ascend the throne of David, but even denied that the Messiah was *to be* a son of David. It appears that he did *not reign* over the *house of Jacob*, nor was he "anointed" either as priest or king; and that he did *not* save the Jewish people, either politically, morally or religiously; nor did

he make Jerusalem the centre of light and power, or himself receive the homage of kings. To the exact contrary of all this he was regarded by the Jews as a demoniac, an impostor, and pestilent agitator, and was indignantly rejected, and finally condemned and executed for blasphemy and treason ; while the city which he was to so rule and glorify was, according to his own final prediction, utterly destroyed within that generation, and the people over whom he was to reign were scattered over the world, and, from thenceforth, have still anxiously awaited the coming of him who should really "redeem Israel" and crown Jerusalem with the glory foretold by her prophets. His public efforts met only with the saddest failures, and the cities or villages in which they were chiefly made he immeasurably denounced and consigned to a hell deeper than that of Sodom and Gomorrah for their rejection of him. Even the religion which was afterwards based upon his supposed resurrection, became the religion of the Gentiles—never that of the Jews. What he proclaimed as his exclusive mission has never been fulfilled. The Jew has only known his religion to persecute it and be persecuted by it ; and now Judaism and Christianity stand side by side as "oil and water." Was all this a fulfilment of the promises said to have been made by the Angel Gabriel in announcing this same Jesus ? Looking dispassionately and fearlessly at the plain and unequivocal assurances of the prophets, at the equally unequivocal assurances of Gabriel, and at the immemorial and never-doubted constructions and beliefs of the Jews, can we even imagine a better or completer way how *not fulfil them* than is presented by the person and life of Jesus ? If God had deliberately designed to

deceive the Jews—to hold the word of promise to their ear while breaking it to their hope, could he have more grossly and successfully performed it?

Nor will it do to gratuitously assume and interpolate a *condition* into the prophecies or in the promises of Gabriel, and then inquire whose *fault* it was that the prophecies and annunciations were not fulfilled. There are no conditions in the prophecies: they are, and purport to be, pre-statements of future *facts*—to be pre-written *history*, and not statements of conditioned or contingent possibilities. If they were the latter they would not be prophecies at all, and any subsequent conversion of them into such contingent promises, not only divests them of their character and only valuable characteristic as prophecies, but is a liberty on our part as puerile as it is unwarranted. If the prophecies are from God, who gave us, or any other mortal, the right to interpolate conditions in them—much less adopt something *we think ought* to have fulfilled them, and then, because it did not, destroy the very prophecy itself by converting it into a conditional promise which *might* have been fulfilled by *our* “something” *if* some other person or thing had not failed to do what was necessary to bring it about? We have no right to thus tamper with, or pervert, the unconditional word of God to justify our peculiar notions or shield our own errors. The prophets and Gabriel did not say that the Jews *might* have a Messiah, or that Jesus would be that Messiah, *if* they would accept him; but they announced the *fact* that a Messiah *should* come, and *had* come in the person of

Jesus, who should be, and was, the "son of David" and the "Lord's anointed," and should *in fact* be "great"—receiving the homage of earthly potentates; should in fact sit upon the throne that his father David had occupied, and temporally redeem and exalt Israel. What a monstrosity is it for us to affirm that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies and promises, by asserting that he *might* have fulfilled them *if* the Jews had accepted him; when a *part* of the very prediction was, that he *was to be* accepted by them, and to actually reign over them? And, How do we know, or how dare we affirm—that, if the Jews had actually accepted him and crowned him as king when he entered Jerusalem, the Romans would not have crushed both him and Jerusalem sooner than they actually did? Even his assumed conditional success is but an unwarranted and incredible assumption. But a still more singular inconsistency in this matter is, that the worshippers of Jesus, in the face of these prophetic assurances and these direct annunciations through the Heavenly messenger of God, not only attempt to *excuse* their *non-fulfilment*, and cast the blame upon the Jews, but both they and their Master, after his failure, have endeavored to construe the Scriptures as meaning that the Christ *should* fail and be crucified, and have based the salvation of the World upon the fact that the Jews *did* reject and crucify him. What a pity that God had not given Gabriel a hint of this, instead of sending him forth with his flaming annunciation of kingly and Jewish triumphs! What a deal of persecution, misery and disappointment it would have saved his "chosen people" if he had only suggested to the prophets that the Messiah was to be crucified instead of crowned!

Having glanced at some of the more direct evidences of the fact that the miraculous recognitions and prophetic fulfilments asserted of Jesus were subsequent mythic creations or adaptations, and not real facts in his history, Let us continue to test this matter from another point of view. Let us briefly consider some of the necessary *presumptions* arising from the natural effect which the asserted facts and relations would have on the after-life, sayings and conduct of the persons concerned, and inquire whether the parties so concerned did, or did not act *as if* they were conscious of the existence of such facts and relations. The decisive nature of this test has already been suggested.

And first :—How will the conduct and declarations of Jesus himself bear this test? Everything which pointed to, or concerned the Christ of their hereditary hopes, was a matter never to be forgotten by a Jew ; and in no age was this interest more intense than in the age of Jesus. Under the feeling then existing such marvellous events and miraculous and public attestations as are alleged to have occurred at the birth and dedication of Jesus, would have been borne, as on the wings of the wind, to the Jews of all lands ; and would have awakened a tremor of hope and joy from the Indus to the Thames. The venerable Simon and Anna are expressive types of what millions of Jews must have been under such an inspiration, and the results which would have ensued would have reached posterity through many channels. They were matters never to be forgotten by those who witnessed or those who believed them. The announcement of a divine incarnation, in the person of

the Jewish Christ, by an express messenger from God, and its actual fulfilment within cannon-shot of Jerusalem, in the midst of such marvellous supernatural manifestations and attestations, was not at all a common occurrence, or one likely to be forgotten by any mortal who had ever been cognizant of its existence. That this event must have been known to many thousands of Jews, as well as to the court of Herod, and to the priests of the Temple, is claimed by the Gospels. That there were thousands of those who were thus conversant with the facts, still living when Jesus appeared publicly, thirty years afterwards, is a necessary inference. The parties directly concerned, surely, could never forget such facts. Jesus must have doubly known them; first, through his mother; and secondly, through his own divine intelligence. If he did not know them, they had never existed. If he did know them, then his conduct and declarations would have been consistent with such knowledge and facts.

Two claims are set up for Jesus. The first of these is that he was God incarnated in the form and person of the Son of Mary for the purpose of redeeming such of the human race as should believe in him, while consigning to eternal torment those who failed to accredit and accept him. With such an object it would have been the highest duty of this Divine Saviour to have used every power and every possible means within his command to insure belief in himself and his mission by every human being. Nor is it possible to conceive of a God, so beneficent and loving, as failing in this essential duty. Nor is it possible to deny that Jesus exhibited the most intense longing to succeed in his efforts for immediate

acceptance by those who heard him, and manifested that intensity of desire by the supreme delight with which he received the faith of even the humblest, as well as by the tears which he shed, and the curses which he launched on account of his failures.

In the second place he is claimed to have been the Jewish Messiah. To have himself accepted as this Messiah seems to have been his first and chief object, and, indeed, his exclusive object until after his final failure and execution. For he not only expressly confined those early efforts of himself and his disciples to the Israelites, but he expressly declared that his mission was limited to that race. This being his sole or even chief object, it was necessary to his success that the Jews *should* believe in him. He knew what was necessary to secure that belief. He knew that they not only would, but did expect and demand of him all the expected "signs" or indicia of the Messiah of prophecy. The prophecies which had promised the Christ, had also promised the "signs" and indicia which should herald him and point him out. It would be by them that he could be known, or not at all. To demand these of every pretender to the Messiahship was, therefore, a matter not only of prudence, but of necessity; since they had not only been given as a means of evidencing and testing the Christ, but the Jews neither had, nor was expected to have, any Falstaffian instinct for detecting the "true prince." Nor had the Jews, be it remembered, a single one of those miraculous attestations at his conception and during his embryonic and infantile life or even those at his baptism, temptation or transfiguration,

which the Gospels now furnish for their believers. He appeared in Judea as a stranger, purporting to have been a young carpenter from a remote and most unfavorable locality. There was never a hint of his birth or parentage or of his place of nativity, and instead of coming from Bethlehem, as they expected, he came from "despised Nazareth," from which the Jews thought no good thing could come, and from semi-Gentile Galilee, from out of which they alike thought no prophet could arise. Everything was to the reverse of their expectations. He was found first exhibiting his powers of healing and announcing the coming of "the Kingdom of God," in Galilee, as John the Baptist had been doing in Judea; and he was soon known to be exciting crowds and selecting a following out of the lowest classes of the Galileans. Will any mortal contend that the Jews *ought* to have expected their Messiah to come from such a source and in such a manner? Will any mortal contend, that Jesus coming thus, could expect, or had a right to expect, that the Jews would accept such an unknown pretender under such circumstances, without *clearly demonstrating* to the proper judges of his claims or to the intelligence of the nation that he possessed all the "signs" and requisites of the Messiahship? Ought he not to have both expected a demand of all this, and to have conceded the *right to demand it*? Ought he not to have known that, as the matter of his claims then appeared to the Jews, the veriest impostor could not have had less show of a claim; and that to place his pretension above those of the merest charlatan, he must meet the prophetic tests required by the Jews? The Jews came to him promptly, even into Galilee, upon the

promulgation of his claims, and urged him to give them these necessary assurances. How did he meet them? Was it in a manner to convince either them or us that he desired to satisfy them and had the power and means to do so? The Gospels give us the answer. From the very beginning he angrily refused to give them any "sign" by which they could judge of his claims, roundly declaring that they *should have none*, and denouncing them as a wicked and adulterous generation for asking it! The asserted reference to the sign of Jonah, even were it not an interpolation, could only have been meant as a mockery. And from thenceforth he never ceased to berate and abuse the officials, the lawyers, the doctors, the scribes and all the intelligent classes and sects who demanded evidences of his claims and refused to believe in him without them. He not only told them that he would give them no sign, but kept his word. He would perform no miracles for them; give no evidences or references as to his birth; refer them to no instance of his many divine recognitions or of his fulfilments of the prophecies; nor assign any reason for his not doing so. He only conversed with them to controvert and belittle their views and to berate the classes to which they belonged. One kind or conciliating word he never said to them. One attempt to rationally convince them he never made. When John the Baptist, just before Herod had him executed, sent messengers to him to inquire whether he was the real Christ, he neither referred to all or any of the miraculous divine recognitions of him at his conception and birth, which John could not but have known, nor to his divine recognition in the presence of John—himself and John's

own solemn testimony that he was the "Son of God;" but simply referred John's messengers to his works and to his preaching to the poor. The farthest he ever went with the Jews on this subject of evidence, was to declare that they would not believe him if he *did* give it, and to say that two witnesses—his father *in heaven* and *himself*—bore witness to himself, well knowing that such proof could equally be asserted by any impostor or madman and was only calculated to insult and disgust the Jews—as it did. Even the "wonderful works" to which he sometimes *referred* them, but which he refused to perform *for* them, were, as we shall see hereafter, performed under circumstances and conditions of the utmost suspicion,—were never witnessed by the intelligent classes, and were also of a kind which the Jews, according to their notions, not only could, but did believe to have been performed by *demoniac agency*.

In view of all these facts, a question of immeasurable significance arises, namely: Why did not Jesus call upon the old witnesses, still living, who could prove the facts evidencing his divine birth and nature (which his disciples so profusely published long after the witnesses had passed away), and array before the Jews those evidences of his descent from David which were so triumphantly displayed after his death?—Why did he not at least kindly cite them to the sources of such information, that they might inquire and satisfy themselves? Let any honest and fair man also answer the following questions,—namely: What was all those divine annunciations in Heaven and Earth and all those alleged fulfillments of Scripture and all those alleged miraculous attestations of the claims of Jesus *for*, or what were they

worth, if they were not to be used and to operate as signs or *proofs to the people* of his Messiahship and divinity? And, if they were so, why did Jesus himself utterly ignore them when they were most sorely needed and justly demanded? Why drive from him, with bitter vituperations, the proper men to judge his claims, and secure his success because of their asking the necessary and universally-expected evidences of his identity as the Christ, and then alternately anathematize and weep over them for rejecting him; when, had he proved one-half of what is now alleged of his conception or birth and, really and in good faith, performed one single miracle, such as that of the "loaves and fishes" or "raising of Lazarus," in the presence of the Sanhedrim, the priests and the multitude in the Temple, he would have been hailed as the Messiah by every living Jew, and the men who condemned him to death and ignominy would have crawled on their knees to kiss the dust beneath his feet? Why did he not do it? Reason can furnish but one answer to such questions:—he had not the *power* to furnish such signs and evidences: *the facts were wanting*. Hence his petulance with the classes who demanded them. He, on his part, demanded to be accepted as the Messiah, but to demand of him, in turn, the proofs or the signs of his Messiahship, was at once to become "wicked and adulterous." No other motive, within the pale of common sense, can be given for his failure and even flat refusal to furnish such evidences. If they existed, his avowed object and manifest purpose as well as his clear duty demanded that he should have furnished them. He *did* perform works as "signs" for his ignorant disciples, such as blasting a fig-tree for

failing to produce fruit *out of season*; Why then refuse to take the slightest pains to convince men of intelligence? Why leave all the divine glories surrounding his birth and the princely honors of his descent to “waste their sweetness on the desert air?” Why have his temptation and transfiguration in secret? There was, and could have been, but one reason for all this: he could not safely trust his miraculous powers before the intelligent and critical classes, and the alleged marvels surrounding his conception, birth, infancy, dedication, temptation, transfiguration and baptism were born far too late for his personal use. There was one sign and test which was the basis of all other Messianic signs, and which could have been then, if ever, easily proven,—namely, his descent from David. His real birth and parentage were real facts, and not after-creations. And this point he accordingly meets,—how, we have already seen,—namely, by *denying* that the Christ *was to be* a son of David. If true, he might also have shown that he was born at Bethlehem. Thus much of the conduct of Jesus towards the Jews and of its consistency with the subsequently related evidences we have been discussing. His language and conduct in other relations will be considered, with this same view as we proceed.

Let us now turn our attention to the conduct and declarations of John the Baptist, and see how *they* correspond with the supernatural manifestations in question. If we are to trust Luke's account, Jesus and the

Baptist were near of kin. It was to the mother of John that Mary first went for consultation and congratulation when *enciente* with Jesus. Their family sympathy was great: the sympathy of the two men as divine instruments in a common purpose was still greater. John, who was the special messenger of God to announce and prepare for the coming of Jesus as the Christ, leaped in responsive recognition of this unborn God when the Virgin approached and while both were still in their mothers' wombs. Such is Luke's account. None can read it and consider the relations, personal and divine, which are assigned to these two infants and doubt that they must have known each other through both their relationships, and must have often met, if not elsewhere, at least at the great Jewish feasts at the Temple, where all attended. Through the same relationships as well as through information from their mothers, they must have known of the pretensions of each other and of the miracles attending their anti-natal meetings. And yet, if those scenes and relations actually existed, How shall we account for the alleged fact that these two cousins afterwards met upon the Jordan *as strangers*? For the Baptist is made to expressly declare to the people that he "knew him not" until he was miraculously pointed out to him by the descent of the Spirit upon him—(see John's account). Can we believe that John had to have either Jesus or his mission pointed out to him on the Jordan if the previous relations and miraculous scenes had actually existed? Had they really existed, it is clear that these men were playing preconcerted and fraudulent parts before the people: a conclusion fatal to the honesty of both and far more improbable than that their

alleged previous relations were of after and mythic growth.

This, however, was by no means the most striking instance in which the Baptist's conduct and language gave a flat contradiction, not only to their miraculous relations and meeting before their birth, but also to this same marvellous divine recognition and his own positive attestation occurring on the Jordan. Long after all these miraculous and divine endorsements of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God, expressly for John's instruction, and long after John had recognized him from his own mother's womb, and had borne positive and exultant testimony that he was the Son of God, this same John the Baptist sends a deputation to this same Jesus, to ask him this question—"Art thou *he who was to come*, or look we for another?" Can we believe this to be the solemn deposition and question of that cousin and prophetic annunciator of Jesus as the Christ who recognized him while both were yet in their mothers' wombs? Can this be the man who saw the Spirit descend upon this same Jesus expressly to assure him that he was the expected Christ, and who bore "record that this was the Son of God?" What was all these miracles worth, and what was John's testimony or "record" worth, if the very man who knew the miracles and for whose information they were performed and who had borne solemn testimony, from these divine attestations, that Jesus was the Christ, could still send to Jesus to solemnly *inquire* of him if he *was* the Christ? If John could not trust his own sight and his own inspirations and official announcements as the "Forerunner" of Jesus the Christ,

who could? or who ought to? When we see the old Prophet sending from the dungeons of Herod to inquire of this new Agitator and Reformer whether he was the expected Christ or whether they had still to wait for his coming, are we not resistlessly compelled to discard those former overwhelming proofs to, and declarations by, John himself; and to regard John as having now *first heard* of the Messianic pretensions or wonder-workings of Jesus, and as sending from his prison to ascertain whether this new man was the one whose coming he had expected and had proclaimed as so imminent? Are not those former miraculous and positive divine attestations as well as those solemn recognitions and affirmations of John absolutely incompatible with this subsequent ignorance and investigation by John? If all that is alleged had actually passed concerning John and Jesus, *could* John have sent such a deputation to Jesus, and especially without the slightest explanation of his own inconsistency or causes for doubt, or even an allusion to their past relations? And, is not the conduct of Jesus himself as inconsistent with those former facts and relations as that of John's? He neither referred John to them—not even to his own affirmation of the divine recognition of him as the Christ, nor does he express the least surprise at John's ignorance or investigation, or in any manner indicate that John had ever previously met or known him. John sends to him as to a stranger, and Jesus receives and answers his deputation as he would have done one from any other unknown man of the character of John. He refers John to no past evidences of his claims whatever, but simply to his present works and preaching. Looking at the conduct and language

of these two men upon this occasion, and at the natural and legitimate implications from them, we are again compelled to conclude that the miraculous scenes asserted to have existed at the meeting of their mothers, before their birth, as well as those at their own meeting on the Jordan, were utterly unknown to either of them—were, in fact, the sheer inventions or mythic growths of after times, and that these men knew nothing of each other beyond the probable fact that Jesus was among the thousands who flocked to the Jordan to receive baptism of John and hear him preach of the imminence of the “Kingdom of God,” and of the coming of the Lord’s anointed King—the Christ of the Jews.

Having glanced at the conduct and declarations of this “Forerunner” of the Christ in relation to Jesus, Let us turn to those of the “Mother of God,” with the like view of testing their consistency with a knowledge on her part of the asserted relations and divine attestations of her son, Jesus. And right here we find our most painful task—a task, however, which shall be as fearlessly as it is faithfully performed. For, however unpleasant it may be to expose the faults or frailties of those whose undeniable good qualities we revere, or to expose those persons who have become objects of worship to others, it is all the more necessary to be loyal to truth when such faults and frailties are sheltered by

Superstition to the detriment of human development. In such cases it becomes cowardly to be weak, and a crime to be cowardly.

The non-existence of the alleged miracles and favorable evidences attending the conception and birth of Jesus fully accounts, but can alone account, for his silence in regard to them ; but it is by no means so easy to account for, much less justify, his reticence and more than indifference concerning his family relations. If the Gospel narratives are true, the Jewish virgin whom God—(that is Jesus himself)—had chosen to be the mother of his own incarnate self, would have been entitled to be treated as she was assured she would be,—namely, as the “highly favored of God” and “blessed among women.” Jesus should not only have had the customary love and respect for his mother, but should have loved and revered her in proportion to the lofty isolation of her glory and divine favor. The correlative view of their relations should have insured an unparalleled love and reverence for, and faith in, her divine son, by the Virgin. Knowing what they both did, their love and reverence for each other should have been unfaltering and unbounded, and Mary’s confidence in his divine nature and mission should have been perfect and abiding. Neither could ever forget what they were, or what they were to each other. The most stupendous event of all time connected them together in bonds never to be paralleled and never to be ignored and forgotten.

Upon the part of both, but especially upon the part of Jesus, such expectations were destined to a complete and sore reversal. On the part of Mary they were singularly and significantly reversed, so far as they depended upon any supposed supernatural relations. She was simply a good human mother of a human son:—no more. It would be impossible to affirm even thus favorably of Jesus. One kindly word of remembrance of the good old carpenter who had so *dreamed* for his safety, so fled for his security, and so labored for his support, or of his most blessed and divinely favored mother, or of those brothers and sisters who had been the companions of his youth; or one word of tender memory of home, or of the past, he appears never to have uttered; nor during all his career does it appear that he ever sent one message of kindness or remembrance to either of them—no, not even from the cross. He never either mentions their names or directly recognizes their relationship. While they had a home, he claimed to be homeless, and without a “place to lay his head.” He never visited them or treated them as relatives.

Four times, and only four times, does this meek and patient old Nazarene mother appear in the history of her son, Jesus, after their alleged return to Nazareth. Once when he is taken with her, at twelve years of age, to the Temple. On this occasion Joseph and Mary, not finding Jesus when they wished to depart, supposed him to have gone on with other Galilean families who had already departed, and took up their journey without him. They found, however, that they were mistaken, and that Jesus had naughtily escaped them and remained at Jerusalem.

They were compelled to return, and it was only after three days of anxiety and trouble that they were enabled to find him. No reasoning can justify such conduct, nor make it other than a naughty and cruel boyish freak. He had wilfully deceived his parents and disregarded their wishes, and had put them to great trouble and anxiety. Nor will our estimate of this divine sample of filial piety increase when we reflect upon the treatment he gave his mother after all her trouble and anxiety in finding him. Do we find the prompt contrition, the tender pity for his suffering mother, and the anxious atonement which might be expected from a thoughtless, but generous boy? Is the mother kissed and forgiveness asked? The Gospel presents a very different scene. Luke gives it to us in the following words (and remember they are from a boy of fourteen): "And when they saw him they were amazed, and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold *thy father* and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that you sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my *master's* business? And they *understood not* the saying which he spoke to them." Is this the answer we had a right to expect to this gentle mother's appeal, from such a son to such a mother? Even if he had had "business" justifying his detention, could he not have previously informed them of it and saved them from seeking him for three days, "sorrowing?" His answer shows that he was neither afraid nor ashamed to do so. But why was it that Joseph and Mary were so alarmed about the disappearance of this lad? Could *he* get lost? Had Joseph forgotten his dreams! Had Mary forgotten the angel Gabriel and all that wonder-

ful past? Had they both forgotten that this was a "son of the Highest"—an incarnate God? How is it, also, that he himself does not recall those facts to their attention, but, on the contrary, hears himself called the son of Joseph, as a matter of course, and speaks of God, not as his father, but as his *master*? And, How is it that we find it admitted that those partakers and principals in the early scenes of his divine recognition and glory, could not even understand him when he spoke about his "master's business?" Of what conceivable use were those early divine annunciations, those heavenly displays, those recognitions of the "wise men" and of the venerable servants of God in the Temple, if Joseph, Mary and Jesus had already forgotten them? Let any free mind ask itself whether such scenes and such language *could have occurred* between these parties if the divine relations and miraculous facts previously recited had ever really existed.

Mary's next appearance was not until her son had entered upon his public career. They were both at the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee, and the mother, perhaps knowing, if the story is to be credited, of his being possessed of some recipe for making an imitation of wine (as thousands of gallons are now made) came to him and remarked—"They have no wine." This simple announcement of a simple fact brought down upon the mother a contemptuous rebuke, as unprovoked as it was unaccountable—at least upon any creditable state of facts. To this simple remark of the mother the son replies—"Woman, what have *I to do with thee*? Mine hour has not yet come." Let us analyze this second sample of

divine filial piety and affection—this new instance of tender regard and reverence for this “favored of God” and “blessed among women.” What manner of address was this of “woman,” for a mother—and such a mother? Was it the customary style of address of the people and time? Far from it. Was there anything in the mother’s question causing or justifying it? Nothing. Was it a personal peculiarity in his treatment of women? We answer doubly: first, that were it such, it was by no means a commendable one, much less a divine one; secondly, that he had no such unpardonably rude habit with any woman *save his mother*. On the contrary, he was noted for his wholly exceptional tenderness and gentleness to women,—even the most guilty and abandoned of them. When Mary Magdalen, who had been as much the residence and as great a favorite of devils as his own mother had been of God, stood near him at the sepulchre, without at all knowing him, he did not address her as “woman,” but addressed her as “Mary”—in so gentle a voice as to bring her instantly to his feet with the exclamation, “My Lord and my Master!” His gentle forgiveness of the adulteress in the Temple has won him many hearts. A number of other instances could be cited, showing that he was, not only gentle and tender with women, but was noticeably fond of their gentle ministrations and personal attentions, without regard to their character or public repute. His mother and sisters seem to have been specially excluded from his uniform kindness to women and children,—especially the mother.

But again: What does he mean by saying to his mother—“What have I to do with thee?” She had

asked him to do nothing with or for her, or anybody else. What could have been his object in making this rude and uncalled-for answer, unless it were a gratuitous renunciation of her, and a sullen putting her aside for having spoken to him at all? And again: What does he mean by that favorite, ominous and oracular expression—"mine hour has not yet come." What hour? Not, surely, the hour for snubbing his mother, for that hour had both come and gone. The natural inference would be that his hour for doing what he supposed her to suggest had not come. But we are at once met by the fact that he straightway entered upon the operation of supplying the very deficiency in wine for the suggestion of which he had snubbed her. What then *could* he mean? Can any mortal tell, unless it was merely to snub his mother, or a mere ponderous assumption of superiority and mystery, as a prelude to his performance? May we not, at all events, again repeat the question—Is this a scene between an incarnate God and his mother?

The next appearance of this "Blessed among women" was still more illustrative of the views and feelings of Jesus concerning his mother and family, as well as of their feelings and opinions regarding him. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew we are told, that—"While he yet talked to the people, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak to him. Then said one unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without and desire to speak with thee. But he answered—who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his *disciples* and said: Behold my mother and my

brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in Heaven, is my brother and my sister and my mother." To apologize for this public repudiation of all family and social ties it has been said that he was terribly excited by their attempts to get hold of him for the particular reason assigned. This reason will be found in Mark's recital of this same occurrence (iii. 20-23), in which it is said—"And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his *friends* heard of it, they went out to *lay hold on him*, for they said, He is *beside himself*. And the *scribes* which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils." His friends thought him "beside himself," and the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem to witness his performances, regarded him as "devil-possessed"—the ugliest form of insanity. His friends—that is, his own family, were trying to get possession of him and save him from the consequences which finally overtook him. This was the sorest of all questions with him, and he declared it the one unpardonable sin to charge that he was "possessed" or what we would now term insane. Whether he knew his mother's object, at the time, is not certain; since he did not wait to inquire, but refused even to see her, and publicly disclaimed having either mother, brothers or sisters save his followers. Let any free mind, however grounded in the Christian faith, if such a mind *can* be free, ask itself whether this wildly excited young man who refuses to see, and publicly repudiates his own mother and all his family—even his sisters who were not present,) can possibly be that "holy thing" which Gabriel said should

be born of this same mother and be "called the Son of God;" or whether this anxious and suffering mother, surrounded and supported by her other sons, and endeavoring to secure her eldest son Jesus as one "beside himself"—can possibly be that same woman who was "overshadowed" by the Holy Ghost at the conception of this same "Son of God?" Did she now forget that that divine son of her virginity—that incarnate God was the identical person whom she is now attempting to "lay hands on" as one "beside himself," and that too for proclaiming himself to be just what the messenger of God had told her he *was* to be, and just what she had exultantly proclaimed him to be to the mother of the Baptist, and just what she of all beings save God (if the Gospels be true) best knew him actually to be? Did she think the incarnate God—the very Christ, could go crazy? Does she now feel that she herself is "highly favored of God" and "blessed among women?" Why, in this strange and trying scene, did neither this divine son nor his blessed mother ever think of these things or remind each other of them? Do not these questions point to an inconsistency and incompatibility between the asserted early life and relations of this mother and son and these later scenes and relations, which no ingenuity can deny or evade?

This poor, snubbed, repudiated, but still loving and human mother is seen once more—is a witness of that final catastrophe to which she and his brothers had so long feared he was rushing. Those disciples who had been accepted in her stead when she had been repudiated, and who had enjoyed his smiles and triumphs,

had now fled, and were in hiding. The weary limbs of this aged mother had mounted Calvary with him—her aching heart responding to every pang of her suffering son : a patient, human mother still ! And now, if never before, one hopes that, while dealing out forgiveness to his insulters and enemies and awarding the joys of paradise to thieves as he sits on his cross, he would say *something* to that patient and agonized mother, and send some kind farewell words to his brothers and sisters. He did not do it. His last and *only* words to her were—“*woman*, behold thy Son :” meaning thereby to consign her to the care of the Apostle John as her adopted son. This was all !

What was the cause of this utter abandonment and express repudiation of his mother and of his brothers and sisters ? The answer is not doubtful. Neither his own family nor his old neighbors of Nazareth would *believe in him*. When he set up his high pretensions or proclaimed himself the Christ or Son of God, his old neighbors were indignant and regarded him as a presumptuous impostor : his family, who had known him longest and best, regarded him as “beside himself :” while the Jews believed him not merely a maniac, but a *demoniac*. This will account for why his mother never returned nor replied to his rebukes : with her opinions, she could not scold him : she could only pity, and be silent. He was, as we have said, so sensitive on this point of his insanity, that he could not tolerate even his own family for honestly believing it and desiring to restrain and take care of him ; while the charge of the more odious form of insanity—namely, “devil possession,” rendered him so furious as to make him de-

clare it the "unpardonable sin"—or "sin against the Holy Ghost"—that is, the sin of attributing his own power and inspiration, which he claimed to be from the Holy Ghost, to the Devil. He was morbidly sensitive on this point, and also as to the slightest doubt or distrust on the part of his friends ; and it is to these morbid feelings and fears that we are to attribute his unkind and unnatural treatment of his family. He could tolerate no one who doubted him : he was furious at all who suspected or questioned his sanity—more especially at his own family.

Both of the remaining supernatural recognitions of Jesus as the Christ (outside of his own works) will be found to have the same cause and basis for a mythical origin and the same isolation from, and incongruity and inconsistency with, the actual facts, as those already considered. The first of these—the forty days' fast and temptation in the wilderness, has all the marks of the myth-moulds. It was clearly an effort to further represent Jesus as an antitype of Moses,—in his act of fasting forty days in Mount Sinai ; and perhaps, also, of the Israelites in their forty years' wanderings in the desert. It is only mentioned in three of the Gospels. Luke, and perhaps Matthew, would have us to believe that Jesus wholly abstained from food for forty days, but Mark would seem to have had the miraculous feeding of the Israelites on manna in view, as a part of the type to be fulfilled, and, instead of declaring that he fasted, he tells us that "the angels ministered unto him." The scene

between Jesus and Satan is only mentioned in Matthew and Luke, and the dialogue is given by them in language too identical for separate independent recollections of it ; and yet the copyist or concordist has made just enough change to expose his *animus*, and yet in a manner to confirm the real identity of their source. The asserted dialogue is as precisely expressive of the conceptions and mental *status* of the men who wrote and manipulated the Gospels, as it is inappropriate to, and discordant with, the mentality and relations of the incarnate God and his great rival, yet subject Spirit. John, however, sets the whole matter at rest, if he is to be credited. He not only does not mention the matter at all, but his narrative of the acts of Jesus during the identical same period positively forbids the possibility of this sojourn in the wilderness. All the other Gospels concur in placing it directly after the scene between John the Baptist and Jesus on the Jordan, and Mark expressly states that he was *immediately driven* into the desert at the close of that scene. John, on the contrary, not only does not give the slightest hint of such an occurrence, but expressly and specifically details the actions and whereabouts of Jesus for many consecutive days after this scene with the Baptist and while, according to the others, he was already in the wilderness. And, instead of taking him into the wilderness from the Jordan, John follows him day by day into Galilee, and keeps him at his work, during the express time when he is alleged to have been in the wilderness. If, therefore, John's record is true, it is impossible that this forty days' fast and temptation in the wilderness could have occurred, and the whole matter must be set down for what, even

on its face, it appears to be,—namely, an after, and very crude attempt to appropriate another Scriptural type. This, like all the other subsequent and mythic growths and adaptations, utterly disappears as soon as it has been mentioned, and without leaving a ripple behind. No such fact was ever afterwards either used or mentioned during the life of Jesus. If it ever existed, it was of no benefit to any one, unless as an experience to Jesus personally. At best it was but an unknown and useless miracle in the wilderness, which was never used, nor mentioned afterwards. One may be permitted to remark, also, that, if Jesus did fast forty days, it was not only a great feat, but one much in conflict with both his nature and habits, and one which he amply compensated himself for afterwards: for it was among the gravest objections to Jesus, that neither him nor his disciples kept the usual fasts; that they did not even wait to wash their hands before eating their meals; and that he himself was a glutton and wine-bibber; while Jesus, in answer to the charge of not fasting, claimed that he was a “bridegroom,” and that bridegroom style and habits should be permitted while he was present.

The transfiguration on the mountain will hereafter be considered in its possible relations to the actual life of Jesus. If it be not wholly mythic, as it very likely is, the account of it is the result of an attempt to mythically remodel and adapt some circumstance in the life of Jesus in such a manner as to secure another evidence of the antitypal relation of Jesus to Moses by imitating the transfiguration of Moses on Sinai. That, however, which is wholly fatal to it as one of the divine recognitions and proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus, without

now going further, is the fact that it was not only never used or mentioned for any purpose whatever, but was expressly required by Jesus himself to be kept a *profound secret* until after his death ! Was not such an intentional attempt to keep from the knowledge of the Jews the very signs and evidences which they required and had in vain sought of him, both derogatory to him as a man, and utterly inconsistent with his professed Messiahship and his anxiety and efforts to convince these same Jews ? Why intentionally conceal the actual signs of the Messiah from the very people to whom that Messiah was sent, and whom he was endeavoring to persuade to accept him ? And for whom were such signs given, if not for those to whom he was sent ? The inconsistency is manifest and complete.

In even hastily examining, then, the after relations, conduct and declarations of the persons who were concerned in, and cognizant of, the various miraculous exhibitions and transactions connected with the conception, birth, infancy, dedication, baptism, fasting and transfiguration of Jesus, now put forward as divine recognitions of his Messiahship and divinity, we have found that these subsequent manifestations and effects show no traces of such prior causes or influences ; that they not only exhibit none of that congruity and consecution which necessarily and always exists between precedent and subsequent related or correlated facts and between knowledge and motives and the resulting con-

duct ; and that, in fact, the subsequent facts and results happened, not as if their asserted antecedents had actually existed, but exactly as if they had never existed at all. We are, therefore, presented with a set of the most wonderful causes and motives without any kind of result or influence flowing from them. We find a record filled with the most palpable exhibitions and proofs of God's recognition of Jesus as the Christ of the Jews, commencing with his conception and extending through all the more prominent points of his life. And yet we find that no use or even mention of them was ever made when Jesus came forward to press the very claims which they are claimed to so fully establish, and which they were *intended to prove* ; although every conceivable motive existed for his claiming their benefit. If they ever existed, they were, not only never used, but all were contradicted—some expressly and by Jesus himself, and all by the language and conduct of those concerned and those cognizant of them. Another very significant fact is forced upon us by the record of these miraculous proofs. Those of them which pertain to the earlier and wholly unknown period of the life of Jesus, where there was no danger of direct *disproof*, and where the tests of their truth and the detection of their errors were far more difficult to the uncritical minds they were addressed to than were those of a subsequent period, we find to be not only detailed with some freedom and particularity, but represented as occurring openly and as having the greatest notoriety, sometimes even in Jerusalem and in the Temple itself. Not so with those which are asserted of the period of his public life. Had the Holy Ghost been permitted to visibly descend upon Jesus, and a

voice from heaven to proclaim him as the Son of God, and the renowned Baptist been permitted to have proclaimed him as the Christ whose advent he had been announcing—and all in the presence of the intelligent Jews; and Jesus had permitted the public to witness him starve for forty days, and to have seen Satan carry him through the air on to a mountain, or the pinnacle of the Temple, and there tempt him; and had then permitted them to see his transfiguration in the presence of Moses and Elias on Calvary, or the Mount of Olives,—then he never would have been asked for another “sign” by any living Jew; while his defeat and crucifixion would have been an impossibility. This conclusion was too palpable to be overlooked, and such open and indisputable inferences and contradictions were to be avoided. Accordingly we find the fasting and temptation represented as being in a “wilderness”—a wilderness which is not even named or located. It does not appear that any mortal knew of his going, staying or coming. To have the transfiguration, he takes his three most confidential followers, apart from the rest, up into a high mountain, by themselves, and after his performance he strictly charged them never to speak of it to any mortal until after his death, which they certainly never did. The scenes at the Jordan are not represented as having been seen or known by any person except Jesus and John. The second recognition and declaration of John, recorded by Luke, was all that was performed before others. Two of John’s disciples are said to have heard John recognize him as the “lamb of God.” And, What was the result of this single instance of permitting such things to be known? Upon this single, simple, and by no means definite, verbal

exclamation of "Behold the lamb of God," by John, both his hearers forthwith acknowledged, and became disciples of Jesus,—one of them being Andrew the Apostle. Does not this very scene give us an insight into the reason for all these later miraculous signs being kept entirely secret and out of the public sight? Now, can any one tell a *legitimate* motive or reason why these later divine recognitions and proofs,—if they ever existed,—were hidden or kept secret at all? and especially when the early ones were so heralded and published? Why did they herald and publish the first ones at a time when the people were *not* called upon to decide upon his claims; and afterwards when the hour came for the people to actually decide, and to accept or reject him at the risk of their eternal damnation, utterly suppress all mention of those early and forgotten ones, and perform the present ones in a manner that the people who were to decide could neither know nor hear of them? Surely this is all very suggestive of the nature and origin of these stories of the different divine recognitions of Jesus. Had they ever really existed the whole course of conduct would not only have been different, but would have been reversed. The whole course of facts, outside of the mere uncorroborated, bald and inconsistent statements in the Gospels, *disproves them*. They had never been even *thought* of up to the time when Jesus reappeared after the crucifixion.

If the matters attempted to be explained have been presented to the Reader with even the smallest portion of the clearness with which they are presented to the mind of the author, he will scarcely fail to concur with him in the belief that the supernatural evidences of the

divine nature and Messiahship of Jesus are mythic growths of which he himself was wholly ignorant ; and that sufficient has already been presented to show the true nature and value of Gospel evidence, and to prove that they are not only *merely* human evidence, but that they are *very* human evidence.

CHAPTER X.

JESUS AND HIS MIRACLES.

HAVING briefly reviewed, and formed an estimate of some of the more palpably mythic narratives in the Gospels, consisting of divine and miraculous recognitions of the claims of Jesus where the supernatural powers were exercised by others, we may now examine his own alleged miraculous performances. With a view to a comprehension of these, as well as for the purpose of comprehending his conduct at the closing scenes of his career, we must here endeavor to form some conception of Jesus himself,—in order that we may read the miracles in the light of their performer, and the performer in the light of his miracles.

Many of those who have dared to follow us thus far will be somewhat prepared to approach these subjects, and even to investigate the personal character of Jesus, without being utterly paralyzed by their superstitious prejudices and fears. To avoid these trammels of our birth and education, Let us endeavor, as far as may be, to practically forget that there are any possible consequences to our investigations or opinions, and to regard the facts as applying to some other founder of a religion ; reassuring ourselves with the consideration that, if the claim of Jesus is not true, we ought not to believe it,

and that, if it is true, it will only become more manifest by being subjected to all the tests of truth. In testing the pretensions of any man to be considered God, certainly every law of evidence and credence demands that we should at least commence by treating him as a mere man, and proceed to subject every particle of his evidence and reasonings to the most thorough scrutiny and most exacting tests. That he dares to threaten us for a course so palpably necessary and just, should only make us the more suspicious, and the more resolute in applying the strictest tests. Reason, not threats, is the instrument of truth.

Instead of finding the evidence we should naturally expect had God really incarnated himself for the benefit of Humanity and made that benefit dependent upon men's belief in that incarnation, we find only the unauthenticated and mutilated patch-work flung together in our Gospels, consisting of the unverified and uninvestigated statements, traditions, inventions and undoubted forgeries of ignorant, superstitious, fanatical and unknown men of a remote time. Either a consistent, coherent or consecutive account of either the life, ministry or teachings of Jesus is nowhere furnished us. When we examine this bundle of interested, incompetent and inconsistent testimony, it would seem to forbid all attempt at forming a conception of him. Every generation has moulded out of these Gospels a Saviour to suit themselves : the first generations remodelling or changing the traditions and the very Gospels themselves, while later ones have effected their changes through ever-varying constructions of them, and by writing a large and ever-increasing library of lives of Christ, every one of which

must depend for its facts upon this same petty record. And yet, through all this Gospel conglomerate, we are furnished with constant glimpses of the reality, and with sufficient believable evidence to form, as I think, an approximate conception of the actual Jesus, although by no means a certain or complete one. The very fact, that perhaps the larger proportion of the Gospels was derived, directly or remotely, from the simple, undigested and garrulous recitals of ignorant men and women, and was written down in the same inartistic, credulous and careless manner, has resulted in sending down to us, in spite of all the crude subsequent attempts at amendment, many fragmentary facts which incautiously furnish to the modern mind considerable insight into those early men and scenes. That there was controlling design in the original testimony, and its subsequent manipulation, is very apparent,—first, to induce a belief in Jesus ; and subsequently, to accommodate the testimony to special beliefs in regard to him and his doctrines ; but these motives concerned the men and the notions of the time. Had either the witnesses or writers been intending to affect remote generations, and had foreseen the triumph of the doctrine of natural law, and the modern questioning of the very possibility of miracles, the Gospels would have been far more closely pruned with a view to rid them of such unlucky admissions. Never supposing, however, that any mortal could doubt the fact of miracles, they have given their evidence without regard to such a contingency. And to this fact we now owe the fragmentary facts and casual admissions which furnish to the modern mind the desired clue to the real state of facts.

The task of forming a conception of the actual Jesus from the materials furnished, however, is by no means an easy or safe one, even if his character was a less exceptional one than it is. To discover and discard the elements which are purely mythic, and such others as have been carelessly or surreptitiously added or changed, as well as to enter into the spirit of the original witnesses and realize their weaknesses, deficiencies and partialities, and at the same time to detect their unconscious admissions or adverse recitals and conflicts, require patience and at least some habits of judicial investigation, some knowledge and aptitude, and perfect mental freedom. Erudition or scholastic learning or criticism has furnished little or no aid to the investigations which we have made on this subject. We have earnestly and faithfully examined the record and testimony as we would have examined it had it been presented to us for judicial investigation or determination.

In making this investigation we have been governed by certain principles or rules which seem to be the plain dictates of experience and common sense, and to be specially applicable to the facts, and which may be found of service to the Reader, not only in his own investigations, but in exhibiting to him the spirit in which the present one is made, and the rules which have guided it ; namely :

- I. We may suspect error, exaggeration and suppression when there is found a manifest motive for them.

2. We may generally credit disinterested, uncontradicted, consistent and reasonable statements.

3. We should suspect, and demand proof of all allegations in proportion to their *improbability*.

4. We should suspect a mythic growth or subsequent creation wherever a divine or miraculous recognition of Jesus or a fulfilment of prophecy by him is proclaimed, and we may be *sure* of one where such account is either absurd, contradicted or inconsistent, or where no use or recognition of it was ever made *during the life of Jesus*.

5. We should recognize and treat errors, inconsistencies and contradictions in the Gospels and in the conduct and language of Jesus exactly as we would treat them if found elsewhere, taking guarded care to assume nothing in aid or apology of anything on account of the assumed character of Jesus, or of the sanctity of the record; but rather to be alive to the probability of error and imposition, well knowing the uniform habit of religious zealots and propagandists, and the potent motives for both, in this instance, as well as the indisputable fact of their actual presence.

6. We should examine and construe the language of the narrators in reference, not to *our* desires, ideas, knowledge and beliefs, but to their own; remembering that they were ignorant, superstitious, interested and excited witnesses, and especially bearing in mind that, to them, a miracle was neither an unnatural or improbable occurrence, much less an impossible or doubtful one.

7. We should carefully distinguish between what is said for a purpose or is directly calculated to subserve the known purposes of the narrator, and what is garrulously or indifferently related without purpose, as well

as between those direct assertions, *as facts*, of what were manifestly but matters of opinion, belief, or "hear-say," on the one hand, and the more legitimate narrations of personally-witnessed facts or occurrences, on the other hand; giving no more weight to such unqualified and unwarranted assertions than the reports, rumors and notions of such people are entitled to, everywhere.

8. We should reverse our accustomed habit, and consent to suggest no "might-have-beens," or possible possibilities in aid of defective or irrational and incredible assertions, nor anything whatever beyond the necessary or natural implications and inferences from the accredited facts: remembering that the burden of proof is on those who assert the facts, and that *assumed possibilities* can neither be legitimately used to prove actual facts, nor to cover or gloss defective evidence or the indicia of falsehood. In other words, we must not take upon ourselves the illegitimate burden or office of proving, not only that other people's assertions are *not* true, or not proved, but that they could by no possibility have been true; and then cut ourselves off from all chance of *disproof*, by destroying the force of every indicia of error by gratuitously assuming all possible possibilities to aid or cover them.

9. In examining and estimating the evidence of a supposed miracle, we should first consider whether, on its face, the narrative purports to describe what *we* would consider a miracle; and if so, then we should carefully and critically review the recitals of the same occurrence, if such exist, in the other Gospels, with a view to ascertain whether the agreed or uncontradicted facts, as recited, necessarily amount to a real miracle,

or whether, under the most favorable selection, construction and combination of the several recitals in each of the Gospels, we may not fairly conclude or infer from their own testimony, that the transaction or occurrence happened in obedience or conformity to the methods and laws of natural causation. For it will not be denied, that he who asserts a suspension or reversal of the laws of Nature, must absolutely exclude the possibility of the agency of natural causes or efficiency. Secondly : still failing to detect error or deficiency in the statement, we should turn our attention to the probability or even possibility of error in the recitals, whether resulting from ignorance, inefficiency, mistake, false notions, over confidence and faith, imperfect observation or recital, distortions from feelings or interests, or from subsequent alterations of the testimony ;—taking care to observe that the Gospels habitually state in a uniform manner, and with equal positiveness, not only matters of direct knowledge or observation, but matters of judgment, information or belief : and that we are by no means to allow them the benefit of this crude and unreliable habit.

10. If we shall ultimately find that a real miracle has been fully, consistently, uncontradictedly and unequivocally recited, then we must first decide,—whether *any* statement of a miracle, however consistent and complete, made by such a record as we have seen this to be—a record written by unknown men, upon unknown information as to the interested and excited testimony of such wholly exceptionable witnesses as were selected by Jesus, could possibly satisfy us that an actual miracle had been performed : and finally, whether any set of religionists,

in any number, of any age, can be credited to prove a miracle in support of their supposed superhuman founder, or for a moment satisfy us of the mutability of the law of causation—that law whose existence and absolute inflexibility are at once verified by the most overwhelming of all inductions as well as by the most resistless of *a priori* deduction, and upon whose absolute unchangeability depends, as well the truths and predictions necessary to human life, as those of Science itself. And by the time we have put the “marvellous works” of Jesus through this ordeal—nay, before we are half through—we shall not seriously trouble ourselves about the miracles of Jesus or any one else.

II. Lastly, we should judge Jesus as a man—as a man of the time, country, religion and social class to which he belonged—as a man subject to the conditions, influences, errors and frailties incident to his humanity; yet, of course, subject to such modifications as his peculiar personality, aims, and circumstances may seem to require. It is only by treating him thus, that either he, or his life, or his character can be made at all comprehensible;—a proof that such is the proper and only light in which to view him. By starting with the assumption of his Godhood, we find inconsistencies and mysteries accumulate without end;—a proof that this assumption is gratuitous and unfounded. We know him as a *man*, let us treat him *as such*. We do *not* know him to be a God, let us not dare *assume* it, until he has *proved* it—proved it in a manner worthy of such a fact!

The awe and glamour of sanctity which ages of superstition have thrown around the "sacred word" and the "divine man," and the ideal representations of the actors and scenes narrated in the Gospels, have completely obliterated the reality, and have rendered it a perilous and ungrateful task to unmask the rude and unattractive actualities. Art and poetry have wholly recreated the facts, forms and characters of all that pertains to the Bible narratives. The facts, even as they are represented in the Scriptures, are wholly disregarded, save as they may serve for a nominal frame-work for the ideals of their portrayers. Every element has been sublimated by human fancy, and illuminated by human genius. The naked, unkempt and soapless savages of Eden now stand out before our imaginations—the one an Apollo, and the other a Venus. Art presents us the physically defective Egyptian priest—Moses, with the muscles of a Hercules and the head and front of an Olympian Jupiter. The ragged, wild and filthy prophet or saint of the desert are made, not unfit representatives of the "Ancient of Days." The rude cross and ruder crucifixion have melted into a myth—a scene for a spectacular theatre. The bare-footed and bare-headed fishermen of Galilee stroll through the country or gaze from their "model yacht" with a conspicuous rim of supernatural light encircling their heads—a phenomenon which would have driven the panic-stricken multitude into the wildest flight at their approach. The aged and wrinkled wife of the poor carpenter of Nazareth blooms in perpetual and ideal beauty. The young carpenter, their son, appears habitually among men with the face of an angel, with a divine aureola encircling his brows,

and with an invisible sun shining behind his head :—in-signia which would have made every Scribe and Pharisee fall prostrate at his feet, if it had failed to throw them into fits. Such are the images which have awed our imaginations and moulded our conceptions from our childhood. And yet these are neither truthful nor scriptural representations. They are purely ideal, and flow from the common fountain of all myths. Men have been trying to make Jesus what they think he *ought* to have been—to clothe him with his assumed divine personality and character, and to satisfy their own growing ideals and aspirations, in him. The same impulses and purposes have found constant outlet and satisfaction in more prosaic forms—in remoulding the doctrines, character and life of Jesus. The ever-changing and ever increasing demands intellectual, religious and moral development, have found vent in some thousand new sects, heresies and schisms, based upon new interpretations ; as well as in a constant series of new Lives of Jesus or Lives of Christ. The more rapidly men have developed, the more constant and imperious have been the demands for these re-constructions of Jesus and his doctrines ; until, of “lives” alone, we have between fifteen hundred and two thousand, without apparent hope of abatement in the supply or demand ; while, were we to add the pamphlet and pulpit variations, the number would be incalculable. So rapid and signal have the recent changes been, that the Jesus and Christianity of to-day are not at all the Jesus and Christianity even of our own youth. Still, men continue to stretch and warp and cramp and mould into the desired shape that singular conglomerate of Gospel materials. Jesus has become

the inherited symbol of men's religious ideals and hopes, and must be made to continue to symbolize them, through all changes, and to furnish soul-clothing for each generation, until the cloth has become too thread-bare to be re-stitched. That the truth should not have been approximated until recently, it is not to be wondered at ; since the object was not to ascertain who and what Jesus was, but to establish the existence of the *desired Christ*. Nor, as we have said, was there a possibility of approaching a solution of that supposed mystery involved in the Gospel narratives, which Mr. Beecher now confesses to be insoluble, while they thus attempted to read in them the life, character and teachings of a God. Until we can divest ourselves of our ideal Jesus and of his ideal followers, purposes and surroundings, and cease this effort to force the conduct, character, ideas and life of a man into the moulds of those of a God, the endless riddle must remain unread. Even freed from these fatal obstructions, neither the record, nor Jesus is easily comprehended. The man was not understood by his own personal followers, and, were he now living, he would be equally incomprehensible to the same class of minds ; while it would only be to the few, of any class, that he would be at all understood, and then only by professional skill or through psychical and pathological sympathies.

Recently, there certainly have been approximations towards a true conception of Jesus and the Gospels. Strauss has exposed the true nature of the origin and the true character of the most striking parts of the Gospel narratives. M. Renan has had the courage to strike the key-note to the singularity and mystery in the character

of Jesus. Mr. Beecher has dared to think of him, in his humanity, in a manner that is largely true, and still more largely suggestive of the truth. That he failed to see farther was clearly owing to the fact that, to see more was to see too much.

HIS UNRECORDED LIFE.

The entire early history of Jesus is unknown, with the exception, perhaps, of the characteristic scene of his truancy at fourteen. That his family resided at Nazareth is sufficiently certain. That they had ever resided elsewhere was never hinted during his lifetime. His neighbors of Nazareth treated him as one reared among them. He was, as we have seen, tauntingly questioned as to his being a Samaritan. Under this charge, he not only remained suspiciously silent, but there are a number of facts which could fairly be cited as evidencing more than ordinary Jewish relations, on his part, with that despised people. Taking the whole record, we have, however, no sufficient warrant for considering him other than a Nazarene.

There are certain obscure hints and possible infer-

ences to be drawn from the conduct and language both of himself and others, which might suggest a query as to his parentage, but reflection would only return us to where we are alone authorized to start,—namely: that he was the legitimate offspring of Joseph and Mary. His neighbors expressly claim that he was the son of Joseph. His disciples, during his life, expressly called him the son of Joseph. His mother expressly called Joseph his father, while Jesus not only acquiesced by his silent acceptance of it, but, in direct connection and reply, speaks of God, not as his father, but as his “master.” Whatever suggestions may arise from the Gospel narratives, we are only authorized to consider Jesus as the offspring of Joseph and his wife, in due course of law and nature.

Of the early life of Jesus, Mr. Beecher, in his *Life of Jesus the Christ*, says—“We are to remember that, whatever view of the mystery be taken, there will be difficulties which no ingenuity can solve.” This is quite true from Mr. Beecher’s stand-point and method. Treat Jesus for what he is *claimed* to be, and the difficulties and mysteries which surround him are indeed insoluble. Treat him, however, for what he *was*, and there is no *mystery* to solve. Did Mr. Beecher fail to perceive the fatal effect of his admission—fail to perceive that such difficulties in interpreting the facts upon the orthodox hypothesis as to the nature and character of Jesus, either argues a defective record or a defective hypothesis? Or, can Mr. Beecher conceive that God would have placed man’s eternal destiny at stake upon his belief in, and acceptance of, a scheme of salvation based upon a

character and record which "no ingenuity" could comprehend? Would he not have had both the desire and the power to have made it comprehensible?

Touching the youth of Jesus, Mr. Beecher continues—"There was nothing that we know of, to distinguish this child from any other that ever was born. * * If we had dwelt at Nazareth and daily seen the child Jesus, we should have seen the cradle life of other children. This child was no prodigy. * * If this was a divine person it was a divine child, and childhood meant latent power, undeveloped faculty, unripe organs, a being without habits, without character, without experience, a cluster of germs, a branch full of unblossomed buds, a mere seed of manhood. * * There are certain genuine experiences which must have befallen Jesus, because they belong to human life. He was a child. He was subject to parental authority. He lived among citizens and laws. He ate, drank, labored, was weary, refreshed himself with sleep. He mingled among men, transacted affairs with them, and exchanged daily salutations. He was pleased or displeased; he was glad often and often sorrowful. He was *subject* to the *oscillations of mood* which belong to *finely organized persons*. There *must have been* manifestations of filial love. [Mr. Beecher dared not say the Gospels exhibited such.] * * There is no evidence that he was thought remarkable by his fellow-citizens. On the other hand, none were less prepared to see him take a prominent part in public affairs than the very people who had known him from his infancy. * * He was the 'Son of man'—a real boy, as afterwards a most manly man. He knew every step

of growth ; 'he underwent the babe's experience of knowing nothing, the child's of knowing little, the universal necessity of development. * * The common people heard him gladly. He had sprung from among them. He had been reared in their pursuits and habits. For thirty years he was a man among men, a laboring man among laboring men. * * Who imagines the boy Jesus going or coming at command—leaving home, with his tools, for his daily work,—lifting timber, laying the line, subscribing the pattern, fitting and finishing the job—bargaining for work, demanding and receiving his wages—conversing with fellow-workmen, and mingling in their innocent amusements? Yet must not all these things have been? We must carry along with us that interpreting sentence which like a refrain should come in with every strain:—'In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.' " Thus much of Mr. Beecher's conception:—a very frank one for a Christian.

From his whole language and teaching, as well as from the total absence of the slightest indications of a superior education, and the fact that he is spoken of in the Scriptures as illiterate, we are driven to infer that his general knowledge was limited to such as might well have been acquired by any capable mechanic under conditions and opportunities which may be readily and fairly suggested and imagined of himself. Outside of his moral and religious ideas, and, perhaps, a knowledge of certain

specific arts and facts, he seems to have merely had the general ideas and knowledge of the class to which he belonged, and those were certainly very crude, primitive and limited. He gave us no new conceptions of this World or of heaven or hell. He believed that the world was swarming with personal devils, who often took possession of the bodies of persons, and usurped control over them ; and that he had the power to master and cast out these devils, and regarded it as one of his choicest supernatural gifts, and the source of a large portion of his most telling miracles, sometimes ordering them out by thousands from a single person. The Gospels nowhere deny or question any of these old fetichistic notions, but continue to accept the reality of magic and witchcraft and the significance of dreams, as well as this notion of devils and devil-possession. While, however, his general ideas were those of his class, we must neither assume that he was also their equal in capacity, nor forget that, as a migratory craftsman, he may be supposed to have had opportunities for gathering up almost any known secrets or arts in his visits to Jerusalem and the cities of Syria and Galilee, where he had opportunities for meeting both Jews and Gentiles from almost all lands.

His religious notions, in their general frame-work, corresponded with those of his time and country. On the subjects of a special day of judgment, the existence of a hell, devils and Satan, a future life, and the resurrection of the body, he seems to have accepted the

popular notions of the Pharisees. He nominally accepted the Mosaic laws, but he paid little regard to their mere literal or formal requirements, and seems never to have permitted them to interfere either with his wishes or purposes ; and, when attacked for breaches of them, he managed them as his subsequent followers have his own — that is, interpreted them to suit himself. He cared more for the spirit of right than for the forms of law, and declared that to love God and your neighbor embraced the whole law and the prophets. He regarded the old law as good in its time, but as having allowed many things to the people on account of the “hardness of their hearts,” and contended that the new state of things demanded a higher moral standard and requirements—that, while it was proper to give milk to babes, it was necessary to give meat to men. It is not proposed, however, to attempt an exposition of his theological views, further than they may specially serve to illustrate his character or conduct.

His moral notions and precepts were certainly admirable, and in advance of those of the Jewish Scriptures. But they were neither superhuman nor new ; for every feature of them had been considered and discussed long before he was born. Nor can it be justly claimed that they were theoretically perfect, or that he was, personally, a perfect exemplar of them. For, we shall find the scripture quoted so approvingly by Mr. Beecher fully exemplified by him. If it behooved him “*in all things*”

to be made "like unto his brethren," he must necessarily have been subject to human errors and frailties, which his life amply proves him to have been. The subsequent declaration of his worshippers that, although tempted in all things like ourselves, yet he was "without sin," is clearly an after-adulation, which is not only in direct conflict with this declaration of his complete similitude, in all things, to his brethren, but is in direct conflict with the express declaration of Jesus himself, who, upon being addressed as "good master," frankly and promptly rebuked the woman by replying—"Why callest thou me good? There is *none* good but God." Had his life and conduct, indeed, for thirty years, been absolutely without sin or error—absolutely perfect, as was long afterwards claimed, it would have been quite impossible for his own family and old neighbors to have treated either him or his pretensions in the manner they did. A thoroughly tempted, and yet absolutely sinless man of thirty years of age, is a far greater marvel and a far higher evidence of direct divine aid and support than any miracle ever claimed to have been performed by Jesus, and one which must, at once, have been recognized by all as powerfully corroborating his pretensions. It was the very lack of any such peculiarities in his past history which rendered his old neighbors so indignant at his subsequent extraordinary pretensions. We shall find quite sufficient evidence in the recorded life and conduct of Jesus to prove the truth of his own declaration that it was not him, but God *alone*, that was good or perfect.

What concerns us much more than his religious notions or his moral precepts, are his social and political sympathies, notions and purposes. That he was possessed of a religious nature and of exalted religious aspirations is quite true. That he was a Jew, seeking to agitate and control Jews, under a claim of being their Messiah, rendered it a matter of necessity, also, that he should have advanced his purposes, if at all, by means of the religious sentiments and aspirations of the people. For, with the Jew, politics and religion were not only inseparable, but were identified. His politics and social philosophy were a part of his religion. The political element in his religion, however, will be found to have dominated and controlled the public life and efforts of Jesus, and to furnish us the true explanation of his motives and course of conduct. The disastrous result of his political efforts has driven his followers to ignore or explain away the plain facts and purposes of his public life and efforts, but they still stand indelibly stamped upon the pages of the Gospels. The peculiarities which distinguished and controlled Jesus and his destiny were neither his religious nor his moral views, since they were neither singular nor new; but they were to be found in his social and political views and purposes, and in his own self-estimate and his mental conformation and condition. The plain Gospel facts are: that Jesus had been seduced into definite political aims, and bent all his powers and energies to their attainment; that he had special and extreme radical notions on social and economic questions, and both preached and practised them; and that these aims and views were the main-spring of his course and conduct, and can *alone* explain

them. We shall find that, from the time it entered into his mind to claim the Messiahship, he used every effort of which he was capable to become King of the Jews, as the Messiah was expected to be ; and that he prosecuted this design up to the point of his having himself publicly proclaimed king, and of making a kind of royal and triumphant entry into Jerusalem, for which he was condemned and executed : all of which we shall more clearly perceive as we advance. It behooves us, then, to endeavor to comprehend his social and political views in our effort to interpret the man and his motives and conduct.

Jesus had been born to poverty and labor. Even during his known manhood he lived upon the labor and charity of others, and seemed to exult in proclaiming himself utterly homeless and poverty-stricken. He had personally felt, all his life, the privations, sufferings and sorrows of the poor, as well as the insolences and oppressions of the wealthier and ruling classes. He had witnessed the hypocritical self and Mammon-worshippers grinding the faces of the poor, under their pharisaical garb of righteousness, as they now do. And, amid these associations and experiences of the poor, he not only imbibed the ideas and prejudices of the poor, but he lent to them the force of his higher capacities, and the intensity of his more exquisite sensibilities. He lent to them still more :—the desire and purpose of *redress* and *retribution*. With the mass of his fellow-sufferers, their wrongs were only a subject of fretful or sullen discontent. Not so with Jesus. He had the elements of the Reformer and the Revolutionist too strongly developed

in his nature to permit of patient submission to oppression and degradation. His spirit was not one of submission, but of resistance and domination.

The socialistic notions of Jesus were very pronounced and fixed. They could not change without a change in the man, since they were the outflow of his emotions and sympathies, rather than the speculations of a Philosopher or the conclusions of a statesman. His desires and repugnances were the measure of his hopes and aspirations, and he had neither the philosophic insight nor the practical experience to perceive their impracticability. He did not reason : he felt. He was aflame with sympathy for the down-trodden poor ; while he burned with indignation and hatred of their oppressors. Neither his sympathies nor his repugnances were of closet growth, but were fiery realities, born and nurtured from his own experiences and observations. His over-sensitive nature had been goaded, not only into a spirit of resistance and reform, but into a spirit of domination and retribution. His sympathies had not been enlisted for Lazarus, but he could, with exultation, send Dives to Hell. No radical reformer has ever shown himself more bitterly antipathetic and denunciatory of the "upper classes" than Jesus. His bitterness never ceased to flow upon them, like a river of wormwood and gall. He hated self-righteousness and social distinctions worse than political slavery. He repeatedly and serially denounced every class of the Jewish people, save the simple and credulous poor who believed in him, and to whom he awarded the inheritance of the earth and the smiles of God. To the meek, humble and suffering

he distributed celestial joys with a free hand : for the rich he had the assurance that it was as impossible for them to get to Heaven as it was for a camel to go through the eye of a needle :—an ordeal which his present disciples seem even anxious to brave. He neither proposed to level downwards nor upwards. On the contrary, he uniformly proposed, not merely to destroy distinctions, but to *reverse conditions*—to exalt and reward the poor and lowly, and to humiliate, subordinate and punish the higher and wealthier classes. But, while he was no “Leveller,” as between the oppressing and oppressed classes, he both taught and carried into practice a system of personal equality and socialism among that humble class who were to “inherit the Earth.” Among his followers he practically adopted his doctrine of personal fraternity and of a community of goods : keeping all things in common, and having a common purse. And to rebuke and impress his more ambitious disciples, he declared that he who would be first should be last, and he who would rule should serve, and set them an example of humility by washing all of his disciples’ feet. The only wealthy man who openly offered to follow Jesus was driven from his purpose by this demand to distribute his property among the poor. The Jewish and Galilean disciples of Jesus continued to follow his precepts and example, after his resurrection, and kept all things in common. And, so heinous was deemed the offence of evading an entire surrender of their property into the common fund, that it was reported and believed that Ananias and Sapphira were stricken dead for secreting a part of their own estate. That this was both the doctrine and practice of Jesus

and of his Jewish and Galilean followers is not to be questioned.

Both his conduct and teachings gave evidence of still more striking and visionary notions of property and labor. He constantly endeavored to inspire a contempt for property, and denounced the labor, care and providence which secured it. He urged his followers to have no care for the things of this world, but to trust in providence and let every day provide for itself; illustrating his views by the birds of the air, which were provided for, and by the lillies of the field, which were more gorgeously arrayed than Solomon, although they neither toiled nor spun. When he sent his disciples abroad over Palestine to arouse the people in his behalf, he instructed them to take neither purse nor scrip, but to depend upon providence and charity. He rebuked Martha of Bethany for her anxious labor and care about her household affairs, telling her to expend no care on such things, but rather to choose the "good part" adopted by her sister Mary:—Mary being then engaged in idly anointing his own feet with precious ointment, leaving her sister to do all the work. John the Baptist had said—"He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none:" Jesus went further, and declared that, if a man ask you for your coat, you should "give him your cloak also." All of this is now complacently ignored by his rich and self-satisfied worshippers, but the doctrines of Jesus on the subjects of property and labor cannot be misconstrued without perversity or stupidity. For no facts are more prominently or explicitly set forth in the New Testament.

But, How *could* a divine or perfect being proclaim such utterly impracticable doctrines? That is a question for his worshippers to answer—a question, however, which they will find it impossible to answer upon their assumption of the divinity of Jesus. They dare not defend the doctrines as they were plainly and unequivocally maintained and practised by him and his followers: What, then, will they do? Will they estimate the man by his principles and his acts, or will they *force* the facts to fit the mould of their assumed character? Reason would not hesitate a moment for an answer. But, Has Reason anything to do with it? Reason asserts that these and the like facts are the means, and the only means, of *judging* and *testing* his character and infallibility.

A naked and unexplained presentation of these views would do injustice to the rationality of Jesus—would make the matter too visionary even for the extreme and sanguine reformer of Nazareth. To award him the proper justice we must take them in connection with his other views which affected them. He had lived in an age of great spiritual exaltation and expectancy. He had witnessed, and felt the influence of the general and passionate longing for, and feverish expectancy of, the advent of that Messiah whose God-secured triumph was to rend the shackles of the Jew and inaugurate the “Kingdom of God.” The stern prophet from the desert had announced that its advent was imminent, and had baptized and purified the people to receive it. Jesus

was not only inspired by the spirit of the time, but became wholly absorbed by it, and endeavored to realize it in his own person. In him, the national craving and delusion found their extremest and most practical expression. Like John, and perhaps inspired by him, he commenced his ministry by proclaiming that the "Kingdom of God" was at hand, and announcing the religious and social doctrines and conditions which he supposed would prevail under the new and divine *regime*. His zeal and radicalism were more fiery and pronounced than even those of the impassioned ascetic from the desert. He regarded the old order of things as rotten to the core, and imagined that they were on the eve of giving way before the coming "Kingdom of God," in which oppression would receive a righteous retribution, and the suffering and oppressed would find rest and a divine abundance. This new order of things was to be momentarily expected: Why, then, labor and toil for the future, or worry about the needs of the old *regime*? No unbiased mind can carefully and fearlessly read the Gospels, with this rendering of the facts in view, without finally conceding that it is the true one. It is manifest, then, that we must account for the otherwise absurdly visionary doctrines of Jesus about labor, property and worldly prudence, by these other and still more visionary notions about the immediate coming of the "Kingdom of God," when these economic labors and cares would no longer be needed and God's favored ones would bloom like the "lilies of the field." We are not, however, to always expect even this much consistency in the notions or conduct of this excitable and impassioned young reformer. His views and conduct were progressively

developed and modified as he advanced, and were largely controlled by his varying conditions and prospects and still more by the varying state of his own mind, which we shall see rapidly assuming even opposite moods and exhibiting the most startling changes.

That, however, which more than all else separated Jesus from his fellows and shaped both his ideas and conduct, remains to be considered. Mr. Beecher tells us that he was "*subject to the oscillations of mood which belong to finely organized persons.*" This is a very mild way of hinting, or rather apologizing for the real facts. This may have answered to characterize the primitive mental habits and condition of Jesus, and, as such, it would indicate a nature peculiarly subject to be driven into his actual condition in after years; but Mr. Beecher certainly falls very far short of expressing that over-wrought sensibility and morbid emotional state which gave shape to the visionary hopes and ideas of Jesus during his public career, and resulted in that supreme self-consciousness and that hungering after love and adulation which made him strive to make himself all-and-all to his followers, the fountain of life and beneficence to those who would only believe in him, and the Messiah of Israel. Nor does he express those extreme and frequent oscillations, or rather reversals of mood, often upon the most frivolous occasions, which his known life so clearly exhibits. Mr. Beecher gives us

merely the germs and predisposing nature leading to the striking super-exaltation of nervous and emotional action which was so plainly manifested in after scenes, and which so promptly arrested his early triumphs and operated so disastrously upon his after fortunes.

Already, at Cana of Galilee, we have witnessed a moodiness of temper, a mysteriousness of speech and manner, a causeless and abrupt rebuking of his mother, and an uncomplaining forbearance on the part of the mother, which, in connection with her after conduct, leave no room to doubt that the mother was not then taking her first lesson in forbearance, or having her first experience of that morbid mental state which was so soon to cause her to be openly repudiated, and to compel her to endeavor to restrain her son as one "beside himself." This was probably only one among the many premonitions of those sudden, and often unaccountable fits of exaltation and depression to which he became subject. The Gospels show, that his mental action, his affections, his moods, his opinions and his actions were all extreme, and that his transitions from one extreme mood to another were frequent and striking. He loved those who believed in him, and yet he domineered over them in the rudest manner,—often silencing them with apparently uncalled-for rebuke. He often cursed and sometimes wept over his failures, and consigned, with a single curse, a whole catalogue of cities, in which he had chiefly labored, to perdition for refusing to believe in him. One moment he would invite followers by declaring that his "yoke was easy and his burden light:" at another he was declaring the utter privation and

humiliation of his own condition and that he was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, or describing the persecutions and sufferings which awaited his followers. Now we hear him pronouncing blessings on the peace-makers, and anon we hear him declaring that he himself came, not to bring peace into the world, but a sword, and to breed contentions and discord even between the nearest relatives. With one breath he tells us to love our enemies ; with another he is heaping curses, worm-wood and gall upon the heads of his own enemies ; and with still another, declaring that he had refused or ceased to even *pray* for the world, and prayed only for his immediate followers—(John xvii. 9). These violent extremes were oftenest aroused by fear, by opposition or by public discussion. When excited by long speaking his extremes knew no bounds. Under such excitements he would declare, that God was in *him*, and he was in his disciples, and that his disciples were, at the same time, in him, while he himself was in God : that he was the bread of life and the water or well of life, and that if any one eat of him he should never hunger, and that whosoever should believe on him—"out of their bellies shall flow rivers of living water," and that "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you." Such wild and incomprehensible speeches astounded some and disgusted others. They drove from him the ignorant multitudes in Galilee which had, at first, flocked around and encouraged him. The strange story about the ventral rivers and a few others scared off the officer who had intended to arrest him and who declared that he had never heard such talk—that "no man ever spake like this man."

His extraordinary nervous and sympathetic organization early exhibited itself in a form which, although common to all ages, has been little understood in any, and which more than anything else, perhaps, tended to the self-delusion of Jesus himself. We allude to his personal magnetism,—whatever that may be. That he possessed an extraordinary amount of the personal influence usually called personal or animal magnetism, would seem very evident from the many facts casually stated in the Gospels. His power of impressing the masses ; his wonderful control over his followers ; the picture of John snuggling on his breast like a maiden lover, that of strange children swarming on him ; of one woman following him even to a gentleman's table and sitting at his feet bathing them with her tears ; of another bathing his feet with precious ointment and wiping them with the hair of her head ;—all these while he was in his loving and attractive mood ; while, in his reversed mood or revulsion of feeling, we find his awe-stricken questioners standing dumb under the light of his eye and terror of his scathing rebukes or anathemas ; his disciples quailing without a word before his sudden and unaccountable rebukes, or following him in silence and at a distance, or so impressed with his manner that they durst not speak to him ;—all show his singular magnetic power. It is in his power of controlling nervous diseases and soothing convulsive nervous or mental agitations, however, that we shall witness its highest evidences and most palpable manifestations. It was to this hidden and apparently superhuman power of healing and soothing, that he owed the first popular suggestions that he was an inspired person,—possibly the Mes-

siah himself. And it is more than probable that his consciousness of possessing this mysterious power gave force and shape to his own extraordinary spiritual aspirations and conceits; and that, coupled with the spirit and need of the times, and the adulations and suggestions of others, it constituted the chief cause of his extraordinary self-deceptions and of his misguided energies. That it formed the principal agency and influence in his curative and soothing performances, would seem the most rational conclusion from all the evidence, and thus it constituted the chief source of his supposed miraculous powers. He had learned, also, the well-established fact of the powerful influence of *faith* upon men's actions, powers, diseases and senses. His conception of its power and influence was, indeed, like most of his other notions, extreme. But to this magnetic power, to the absolute faith of the patient, and to a more than ordinary insight into the nervous type of diseases then so prevalent, we may rationally conclude he was chiefly indebted for such actual successes as he attained as a healer and devil-controller, and for his primary fame among the masses as a wonder-worker—(a fame which was fairly dwarfed by that acquired by like powers and performances in that same age, in the adjoining province, by Apollonius of Tyana). But as we shall further notice these natural causes of his successes we will suspend further notice at present.

The highly and intensely active and sympathetic organization which gives this magnetic power, would be likely, under such favoring conditions, to result in excessive and abnormal mental action and the derangement

of the emotional life of its possessor. Such nervous force and activity would naturally tend to produce an emotional and mental activity which would constantly tend to attract and centre the attention of the mind upon its own activities, affections and mysterious psychical manifestations. With persons so organized and affected the entire thoughts and affections tend to revolve around their own central life. They tend to become introspective and intensely self-conscious and self-absorbed,—a condition most unfavorable to mental health and balance. Such would seem to have been the case with Jesus. He more and more tended to centre everything in himself. He could not allow his followers to be in God: they must be in *him*, while *he* was in God. He would not allow God to be in his disciples, but to be in *him*, while *he* was in his disciples. He must be the medium and centre for both God and man. He was intense in his sympathies and loves, but the object of his sympathy must have implicit faith in *him*, and the objects of his love must accept their ideas from him, and derive from him their very bread of life, and in him find the entire satisfaction of their needs and aspirations. He demanded, in return for his love, an absolutely absorbing devotion and blind faith. His sympathy with the heart-joys and heart-sorrows of others might have been great, yet high over the beating of all hearts were the wild throbbings of his own. He could neither silence nor modulate them, and others must beat in unison and subordination, or produce angry discord in his soul. He could neither brook a superior, nor share the adoration of the multitude or the love of his friends. His friends were welcome to both Earth and Heaven, were the boon but

received at his hands. He must be their "meat indeed, and bread indeed"—they in him and him in them—they eating his flesh and drinking his blood, as their very bread and water of life, and then they should "inherit the earth," and revel in all the joys of Heaven, "without money and without price." Even to such startling extremes as these did his super-exalted and abnormally concentrated self-consciousness drive him, under the stimulants of popular adulation, the adoration of his followers, the success of his mysterious powers and the excitements produced by the active surveillance and opposition to his enemies.

Let us now endeavor to recall and realize the utter uncertainty and often the utter impossibility of the asserted facts which we are to confront, as well as the causes which we have already noticed for questioning, sifting and doubting, or rejecting, the Gospel recitals of the marvellous traditions and stories invented by after times or told by the superstitious, interested, ignorant, incompetent and excited men and women chosen by Jesus as his witnesses, aiders and followers,—let us keep these characteristics of our evidence we say, distinctly before us, while we attempt to rapidly follow the high-strung and strangely excited young aspirant through his career of popular wonder-working and on towards that ever-increasing spiritual and emotional exaltation, which led him to the wildest egotism, to his royal entry into Jerusalem, and to the

cross. To be true to ourselves and to the God of truth, in examining this evidence, we should at least feel an equal obligation to that which we impose upon a grand-juror in investigating an assault and battery—that is, to examine it “without fear, favor or affection”—examine it as we would if we were reading an account of just such miraculous stories happening *now*, told by just such witnesses, written by—we know not who ; of performances by some young wonder-worker in Arabia or Persia, or by some young carpenter of Salt Lake, or by some spiritual medium of Boston, or of our own neighborhood. If we would reject the claims and miracles of the present day, upon like evidence, we should perceive at once that our hesitancy to do so in the case of Jesus, is the result of education, of the awe and terror, inspired superstition and the threats of damnation, and of the glamour, prestige and sanctity which Religion, Time and Triumph have thrown around the person, life, labors and gospel of the young Reformer of Galilee. If we had been reared at Mecca or Benares we should have found no such hesitancy

Jesus did not claim, nor, apparently, even imagine, that he was the “Christ,” until some time after the commencement of his public career—as Mr. Beecher concedes. His first efforts were those of a healer, and, secondly, those of an Adventist—a preacher of the coming of the “Kingdom of God.” The suspicion that he might be the Messiah seems to have culminated in him

gradually, the idea having been first suggested to him by others. His mysterious magnetic powers, his continued excitement, his morbid emotions and self-concentration, the public excitement and expectation, and his own absorbing interest in the advent of the Messiah, were admirably adapted to foster such a conception in such a mind. But whatever mysterious whisperings may have previously visited his dreams, or whatever eccentric habits or strange moods may have alarmed his family, he clearly commenced to preach for some other Christ than himself, and some other kingdom than his own. At first he was simply a co-laborer with the Baptist, without exhibiting the slightest intimation that he had ever thought of the possibility of his being the Messiah. Mr. Beecher, in speaking of this first half of his ministry, most significantly remarks, that, "We shall be struck with three things: the stimulating character indicated, the remarkable partnership of word and deed, and absence of all public claim to the Messiahship. No where is there evidence that he proclaimed this truth in his public discourses, and in the abstracts and fragments which were preserved there is nothing of the kind. Neither does there seem to have been that presentation of *himself as the source of spiritual life* that is so wonderful at a later stage of his teaching." No: Mr. Beecher is right: his super-exalted self-consciousness had not engendered the idea of his Messiahship, nor those "wonderful" ones which made him think himself the "source of spiritual life." As yet, although the causes were at work, all things had not concentrated upon, been subordinated to, and co-ordinated with, his own central life. Up to the close of his sermon on the mount, and after

he had won fame throughout "all Syria" as a wonderful healer, he had never once hinted to his hearers his divine nature or Messianic mission. Matthew sums up his labors prior to that period in the following words:—"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the *Gospel of the Kingdom*, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy: and he healed them." Here we have not one word of a miracle, of a claim to the Messiahship, or to divinity, or to being the "source of spiritual life." But we have an allusion to the kind of diseases which were treated by him,—namely: palsy, lunacy, devil-possession and divers diseases and torments. The terms, "divers diseases and torments," are mere general expressions which are made specific by the subsequent catalogue. *Not a single disease* is named which is not of a nervous or mental character. It is also very clear, from the record, that such diseases were astonishingly prevalent, and that it was an age calculated to produce them. And I believe it is agreed among "the Faculty" that, where there is a prevailing cause and type of disease, all other diseases tend to assume, or become complicated with, that type, and may be aided or cured by its appropriate remedies. We have the fact, then, that the diseases treated by Jesus were chiefly of the nervous order, and a probability that most other diseases assumed something of the same type; and, therefore, may conclude that the magnetism

and faith which would be efficient in mental and nervous diseases, would probably prove more or less efficacious in most instances. That he had some power of healing or temporarily relieving diseases, which appeared mysterious and marvellous to the ignorant multitude, may be regarded as highly probable or certain, and certainly may be conceded without derogating from the claims of natural causation. Perhaps no age or country have been without such men.

His increasing reputation as a preacher and healer was not, however, destined to continue without other and more striking results. The superstitious and credulous multitude, on the tip-toe of expectancy for the coming of the Christ, began to audibly speculate as to who this man with these wonderful powers might be, and to suggest, among other things, in the hearing of Jesus, whether he might not be the "Son of David"—the Christ himself, for whom they were daily hoping and looking. Jesus not only felt the full force of the public adulation, but was immediately and astonishingly fired by the suggestion of his being the very Messiah himself whose advent and Kingdom he was preaching. So soon as he got his disciples by themselves, he promptly inquired of them who the people thought him to be. Upon being answered that they variously considered him as John the Baptist, Elias, and "that prophet which was for to come," he eagerly inquired as to who they themselves took him to be, and Simon told him that he believed him to be "the Christ the Son of God." Here was more than a hint! His exultation was instantaneous, and defied all bounds. He blessed Simon "on the spot:" dubbed him "a rock:" and declared that he

would not only build his church on him, but would confer on him the custodianship of the very Keys of Heaven! This scene compels us to perceive, not only that Jesus had never hinted his divine nature or Messiahship, even to his own disciples, previous to this, but that he himself had never very distinctly thought of himself in connection with it until that connection had been suggested from the crowd—the very suggestion which had called forth these private inquiries of his disciples. Once suggested, however, the idea instantly took root in a soil so prepared and so appropriate, and branched and grew with tropical luxuriance.

Once launched upon this Messianic tide, his course became ever more pronounced and self-endangering, his ideas ever more bizarre and visionary, and his self-consciousness and self-delusion ever more morbid and extreme. Thenceforth, he could not select the men who were to influence his destiny. He was examined and watched by men who indeed looked for the "Son of David," but who also had interests at stake and an intelligence to satisfy—men who would prostrate themselves before him if he proved to be their expected Messiah, but who would investigate his pretensions, and, unless satisfied, would oppose him as a dangerous impostor and agitator. Up to that time he had had matters pretty much his own way, because he had been in the way of nobody else. Thenceforth we shall see him encountering enmity, opposition, espionage and personal

dangers. He will be found, under the excitement of these dangers and adverse surroundings, growing in his self-estimate and increasing in his spiritual intensity and in his political activity and demands. He will be found to concentrate his affections more exclusively upon his faithful followers, and to care less for the mass of the class he blessed in his Sermon on the Mount, and to become more bitter against the opposing classes that menaced his person and opposed his projects. He will be found oscillating more wildly between the extremes of affection and anger. The tone of the "beatitudes," of the Sermon on the Mount, will become lost in the echoes of the oft-repeated "woe be unto you." His scathing denunciations of the entire wealthy, intellectual and influential classes, together with his insulting refusal to give them any sign or evidence of his pretended Messiahship, had thrown the upper and official classes into a bitter opposition to him and his pretensions, and thenceforth he could but reap what he had sown. He had, from the first, refused their overtures, defied and denounced them, and they feared, hated, and finally destroyed him, in their turn.

But the young and fiery reformer, with his absorbing self-concentration, was not the man to yield without a struggle. He chose the masses, and threw himself upon them for support. His "warrior words," as Mr. Beecher calls them, rung out clearly and defiantly. The very curses which brought upon him the vengeance of the Temple party, endeared him to the beggared and suffering populace of Galilee, and might any moment ignite the inflammable masses of Jerusalem itself. Here lay

his hope. He had cut himself from all chance of any other, and he knew it. And, as dangers and difficulties thickened around him, his defiance of his enemies grew more fierce, and his efforts to win or recover the masses grew more designing and intense. He no longer appeared simply as the blessing and healer of the multitudes. Miracles were rumored abroad thick and fast, and of kinds ever more startling : these, and these alone, could arouse the superstitious masses : other claims there were none to offer. The burden of his speeches was no longer "repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand," but "he that *believeth on me* shall have eternal life, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

Having conceived his Messianic designs, he attempted to set on foot an organized agitation throughout the entire Jewish population of Palestine. His chosen disciples were commissioned, instructed, and sent forth to proclaim the advent of the Messiah. To enable these disciples the better to convince the people, he conferred upon them the "*power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases.*" Nothing could more clearly evince the fact that he was totally ignorant of the nature of the powers which he actually possessed. His uncomprehended personal powers had inspired him with a belief that they were divine powers put at his disposal. His solemn bestowal of "power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases," consequently, ended as might have been expected, but greatly to his disappointment. His disciples could neither manage the devils nor the diseases. He had failed in conferring the "power and authority." Still, as a matter of course, he never sus-

pected the fault to lie in the nature of the powers themselves, or in his own power to confer them. The only solution possible to him was, that the disciples themselves had *lacked faith*:—something which they, of all things, least lacked. Their uniform and unquestioning obedience, and their present readiness to go forth, and trudge over Palestine on foot, without money and without scrip, with this solemnly conferred power over devils and diseases as their sole commission and voucher, were certainly supreme evidence of a supreme faith. His mistake, however, was a very natural one: he misunderstood the power and his power to confer it.

This failure of his disciples left Jesus wholly dependent on his own powers for maintaining his pretensions even before the masses:—a matter which became even more necessary, not only to his hopes, but to his personal safety. His own mental labors, anxieties and excitements increased with these ever-increasing demands upon his already overwrought, overworked and over-excited mentality. Events and dangers thickened upon him. He was compelled to assail, to defend, to evade, to elude, or to take to down-right flight, as the exigencies of his wonderful destiny demanded. And, through it all, there was but one hope: he must retain or recover his hold upon the ignorant, fickle and wonder-loving multitude which had first given shape to his aspirations, and which had ever been the one possibility of his hopes from the beginning. He approached, indeed, to that point at which his very life was dependent upon his supposed power to influence the multitude. The popular favor, won by his healing and wonder-working, became

his sole dependence for personal safety, as it had always been his sole chance of success, even for heading a Jewish rebellion. To his thaumaturgic efforts, therefore, was he finally reduced for his sole hope of success, and even for personal safety. Judge him leniently thenceforth!

Before closing this chapter it may be proper to explain that, in speaking of animal magnetism, we do not intend to endorse the doctrines of Mesmerists, Biologists, Spiritualists or Clairvoyants, or the idea of any "spiritual sphere" or odyllic or other new or strange force, but simply to assert that Jesus possessed, in an eminent degree, that personal and physical influence over the nerves and feelings of others which is a power we suppose to be indisputable. With the personal qualities which produce this influence, and the cause or mode of its production, we are not essentially concerned. We are concerned only to know that some such personal influence exists, and that Jesus and others *believed* that he possessed it, and that it was a superhuman power residing in his person—concerned only with the phenomena, and not their source or cause.

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS AND HIS MIRACLES—CONTINUED.

WITH the insight already gained into the character mental condition, beliefs, purposes and environing conditions and circumstances of Jesus, let us serially examine the recitals of his so-called miracles, in the light of common sense and upon the supposition of the possibility of miracles.

The first transaction recited by Matthew which is claimed to have been a miracle, is that of healing a leper—(ch. 8). It is stated that Jesus, being applied to, touched a leper with his hand and healed him, and ordered him to go and report himself to the priests at Jerusalem—for examination under the Mosaic law) That which is at once fatal to this narrative is, that there was no witness as to any part of the transaction save the patient and physician; and Jesus expressly enjoined it upon his patient to "tell no man" what had occurred. Whoever wrote the account, therefore, could have no higher authority for his assertions than mere rumor or hearsay. Nor are we even informed how, or why, it became rumored abroad after this express requirement to permit "no man" to know of it. We have, then, accord-

ing to the record itself, not only nothing which can be called evidence that any such occurrence took place, but we find that such evidence as might have been had was forbidden. But had the leper have written the account himself, it would have been but the unsworn statement of an unknown man. And, even from the statement as it stands,—have we any competent authority as to the stage and condition of the disease? To determine this was a matter of skill,—in which the priests were specially instructed; and it was for their decision as to the fact of his cure, that he was ordered to present himself to them, at Jerusalem. The man does not declare himself healed, nor was he competent to determine that fact. Long after Jesus had passed away, the unknown writer of this narrative *says* that the man was healed, as he would have said and believed of anybody whom Jesus had tried to cure. But, How did he know that the man was healed? Or, How are we to know it? It does not appear that the priests so decided, nor that the man ever started or pretended to go to Jerusalem. He may have died in an hour afterwards, for all the evidence we have in the Gospel. And yet this is what they call stating and proving a miracle! There is not a particle of evidence, much less proof, of anything.

Second. The second miracle is in the same chapter. We are told that a centurion desired his servant healed, but only asked that Jesus should “speak the word,” without going to see the patient. Jesus replies—“Go

thy way, as thou hast believed so be it unto thee." We are then told by the writer, that in that "self-same hour" the servant was healed. But, how are we, or how did he, or even the disciples, know that fact? For the fact that the centurion even had a servant, or that he was sick at all, we have only this asserted statement of an unknown Roman soldier who, for aught we know, or they knew, might have been quizzing the young Rabbi, when no one was sick, just to see what he would do. The very fact that he voluntarily requested Jesus not to visit the patient, and his suspiciously-sublime faith and the seemingly mock humility with which he recites his own greatness and yet deprecates his unworthiness to have Jesus come near him—all to prevent his coming to see his patient, would seem to give color to such an interpretation of his object. Luke's account, not only plainly conflicts with Matthew's, but further confirms this idea. Luke says (ch. 7) that the centurion did *not* come to Jesus at all, but "sent unto him elders of the Jews" to beseech him to heal his servant, professing himself to be unworthy to come before Jesus; and that Jesus actually started to go, but when he approached the house, the centurion "sent friends" to tell him not to trouble himself to come into his house as he was unworthy such an honor. The centurion, with Eastern politeness, managed to avoid either meeting Jesus or have him enter his house. The matter looks singularly like a practical joke or quiz. And, considering the parties and their *then* positions, such a fact would not have been improbable, nor strange. Of the fact of the *cure* we have nothing but the supposition of the writer. For it does not appear that any of them ever knew or were informed of

the result, at any time. Nor would the fact that the man's fever left him, or that he got better from that time, be the slightest evidence of a miracle or that the mere wishes of Jesus had anything to do with it. Such coincidences happen daily.

Third. We are next told (ch. 8) that the mother-in-law of Peter lay sick of a fever, and that Jesus took her hand and the "fever left her." But, How long did he hold her hand, and how soon, and how completely, did the fever leave her? Had the time arrived for an intermission of the fever at that hour? Did the fever return again? Will any one competent to investigate a miracle deny the importance of the facts suggested by these questions, to the decision of the question of a miraculous cure? And yet none of them are answered or met by the narrative. As it stands, there is no assertion, even, of a permanent cure, or of facts to assure us that the relief came through Jesus. But, even conceding that Jesus did relieve her or cure her by "putting on of hands,"—is that a proof of divine power or a proof of the very reverse—of a physical or magnetic influence? Surely the answers to these questions cannot be doubtful. The power or influence may have been unusual and even extraordinary, but it is not supernatural; and the very fact that he habitually brings himself into *physical connection* with his patients, shows that it was a physical influence. With such faith in the patients, and such physical connections with the healer, such cures

cannot be called even "marvellous:"—the examples have been too numerous to permit them to be regarded as such. The fact that the influence proceeded from the body of Jesus through means of contact and was aided by the faith of the patient, was unquestionably recognized by Jesus and doubtlessly by his followers, but, while this would be fatal to his miraculous pretensions, with us, such facts would not at all alter their miraculous character according to their ancient and very different notions about miracles. To Jesus and his followers they would still have been miracles. One thing is to be observed in this connection. No estimate can be formed of the real amount or duration of his personal contact or manipulations from these accounts. In this very case Matthew merely says "he touched her hand," while Mark says, of the same case, "he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up;" and Luke says "he *stood* over her and *rebuked the fever*."

Fourth. We are next informed, in the same chapter, that, while in the Lake Gennesaret in a storm, "he rebuked the winds and there was a great calm." Mark adds, that "the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full, and he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow." There is no statement, even, of a miracle here. Just how they could have managed to continue their voyage with a ship "full" of water, or how Jesus could have slept on his "pillow" in a fishing-smack in such a storm, and have to be waked up out of a ship

already "full" of water, is by no means clear. That they should not have aroused him, not only for their own sake, but for his own safety (if he could miraculously sleep under such circumstances), is quite incredible, unless the so-called storm was but a sudden squall of wind which momentarily endangered them and caused them to ship more water than was comfortable. Both their conduct and that of Jesus forbid any other conclusion. If for no other cause than their own safety, they would have appealed to "all hands,"—much more to their all-powerful Master, so soon as real danger threatened them; and they actually did so. For, notwithstanding the stereotyped *addendum* of their "astonishment"—(after he had done what they asked him to do) we find they *did* think he could save them; for, when the peril was on them, they came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us: we perish"—or, as Mark has it, "Master, carest thou not if we perish." The whole facts, as stated, are incompatible with any danger, save from a sudden "squall" of wind. But what then? Why simply this, that when the momentary squall had passed there would be a "great calm"—as such sudden squalls are ordinarily both preceded and succeeded by such calms. They are mere violent puffs of wind of a few moments' duration, ordinarily occurring in sultry, calm weather. But, Did not Jesus "rebuke the winds?" Very possibly: but just how the winds felt about it, is not so clear. No doubt it had the effect intended—that is, to encourage his panic-stricken disciples. Cæsar effected the same purpose, in a storm, when he called upon his boatmen to remember that they carried Cæsar and his fortunes.

Fifth. We have next, in the same chapter, the casting out the devils from "Legion." Upon going into the country of the Gergesenes, or, as others more properly have it, of the Gadarenes,—that is, into the city or town of Gadara, Jesus and his disciples met two fierce madmen who dwelt among the tombs of the city cemetery, and were dangerous to persons passing. According to both Mark and Luke there was but one, who was called "Legion." The devils who possessed this "Legion"—(let us follow the majority) called out in that set, stereotyped style so common to all the devils everywhere,—"What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" They then beseech him to suffer them to enter into a herd of swine which were some way off—a herd which we elsewhere learn, numbered 2000. Jesus was considerate, and sent them into the swine. But the swine performed the extraordinary feat of running into the sea and drowning themselves; for which the people respectfully invited Jesus to leave their city.

Were it possible for any mind to give a second thought to such a story as this, if told in our day, several very pertinent questions would press for an answer. 1. Was not the "whole city" well justified in appealing to Jesus, *en masse*, "to depart out of *their coasts*," for such a wanton and wholesale destruction of their swine? 2. What *sea* were these ill-used hogs drowned in, and What were the "coasts" of this "whole city?" Gadara was an inland town, situated on the rocky and almost isolated hill which forms the terminus of the mountains of Gilead inhabited by Israelitish people. It was a mountain

town, having neither coast, lake, nor sea near it. The writer of the miraculous narrative supposes it a *seaport city with its "coasts" and its sea*, to engulf the vast herd of swine. There was no water near it that would drown a single pig. 3. Was not 2000 swine rather a large lot to find herding in one body—especially along the barren and rocky slopes of Mount Gilead? 4. Was it not still more singular that they should have been so fortunately at hand on that special occasion? 5. Was it not an incomparable marvel that such a drove of hogs should be found herded around a Hebrew city whose divine laws forbid the use of pork at all, and to whose people it was an abomination? For these Gadarenes were a branch of the tribe of Manasseh. 6. Could all Israel have exhibited so many swine, from the days of Moses down? 7. What right had Jesus to cause or permit the perpetration of such cruelty upon these dumb creatures, or the wanton destruction of such a vast amount of other people's property—merely to gratify a host of demons? If it was merely to show his power, without caring for consequences, would it not have been well to have somebody to see and be convinced? And, Would it not have proved more successful had he have ordered back the hogs to life and to shore again? 8. If devils did control the beings they entered, as they were supposed to do, Why did the devils drive them into the sea and drown them, after they had begged for them, so beseechingly, as a shelter for themselves? 9. What became of the devils? Were they drowned also? 10. Does it not require a faith as all-engulphing as a maelstrom, to reflect that each of these 2000 hogs must have had *at least one whole devil* to inspire and direct it, and still

believe that the whole of these 2000 devils had their abode, and found room for desirable quarters, in the one human body of poor Legion ; and that the man could still live while infested with this diabolical host ?—How large are these devils ?—are they trachina ?

That this one poor Israelite could have constituted a pandemonium for such a host of demons ; that there should also happen to be just the 2000 hogs to accommodate them, feeding on the rocky slopes of this Israelitish and pork-despising city ; that a special *sea* and *coast* should be created for the sole purpose of drowning these hogs ; that these 2000 microscopic devils should have inhabited one man, and should know all about Jesus and the approved mode of addressing him as the “ Son of God,” and should have gotten permission to seek a home in those unoffending pigs and then, forthwith, have driven them to destruction in that “ unknown sea,” and thus deprive themselves of their anxiously-sought shelter and these poor *Hebrews* of such a *host of swine*,—that all this should have actually happened is rather too much miracle for a single dose.

Let us not pass, however, so suitable an opportunity as this for noticing this statement and belief about devils and devil-possession, which is so often repeated in the Gospels. Every class of enlightened people now fully understand that the ancient belief in dreams, witchcraft, magic and devil-possession was a mistake, notwithstanding all these beliefs are directly inculcated, or recognized as true, by the Bible. We feel no surprise, and make no complaints, that these beliefs were prevalent in that early age,—knowing that they constitute a nat-

ural phase of beliefs in the progress of human development, everywhere. But, when we are called upon to base our religion and salvation upon miracles which consist of casting out devils, and thus curing persons who were actually devil-possessed, then these beliefs cease to be mere matters of curious history, and concern us most profoundly. We are called upon to either admit the existence of these devils or to discard the pretended miracle; and, in doing so, to confess the ignorance or charlatanry of their professed worker. Can we believe that such small demoniac beings exist in such hordes upon the earth, and that they enter into men or animals, and live in them like parasites, controlling their actions and maliciously torturing them; conversing with outside persons in any and every human language; having knowledge of remote and hidden facts requiring a universal "clairvoyance," and even an insight into the hidden councils of God? Does not every one know that the phenomena which ancient and unenlightened people attempted to account for by the presence and control of devils, were but manifestations of *insanity*, and that under this belief, the singular notions and conduct of Jesus himself subjected him to the open charge of having a devil? And yet this sinless, perfect and inspired man and incarnate God, Jesus, did unquestionably believe in them—did unquestionably pretend to talk to them and to command and control them at his pleasure! and the Gospels show us, not only that this casting out devils was his most frequent miracle, but was the one upon which he himself specially relied to prove that his own power was from God, and not from devils. If Jesus did not believe in them, he was a charlatan from

the beginning—a charge for which there is no sufficient warrant in the facts. Yet to really believe in them was in direct derogation of all his superhuman pretensions. What solution, then, remains but that which is both the consistent and true one,—namely: that he did believe in them, like all men of his time, that he was but human, and was humanly mistaken. His casting out devils, what there was of it, was the result of the influence and control which his magnetic, and other personal powers exerted over the nervous functions and derangements of others. Insanity, in its multiplied forms, was, indeed, the finest field for the display of his chief and most mysterious power. The supposed talk of the demons to Jesus was, of course, through the lips of the demoniac,—that is, it was the madman himself talking. The wonderful knowledge which enabled them to know Jesus and to proclaim him the “Son of God” in a style of address so uniform and in such direct conformity, not with what Jesus *then* preached, or with what any of his followers then believed, but in conformity with what was believed when the Gospels were written, shows their origin clear enough. They were mythic mouldings of the supposed scenes in their own language and in conformity with, and in support of, their own subsequent notions and purposes, by the Evangelists or others, long after the resurrection had given a new phase to the pretensions of Jesus, and a new direction to the aims and hopes of his followers. The men who wrote them knew no more of the language actually used in those long-forgotten dialogues than Josephus or Plutarch knew of the long speeches which they recite *verbatim*, and yet, of which they could know nothing.

Sixth. The next miracle (ch. 9) was the curing of a man with the palsy—a nervous prostration. This case presents but one new feature. All the rest may be accounted for in like manner as the relief of other nervous affections have been accounted for. But Jesus here varies his terms in addressing the patient,—saying “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” instead of saying—“Arise, and walk,” or “Be thou whole or clean.” This incensed the Pharisees. But Jesus explained that it was as *easy* to *say* the one thing as the other, and cited as a proof that he *had* power to forgive sins, the fact that he could heal the man’s sickness. This seems a striking *non-sequitor* to those who are not familiar with the notions of undeveloped peoples. In the days of Jesus the people thought that all diseases were sent upon men on account of their sins. They had no conception of natural causes or afflictions, but regarded afflictions as a divine punishment. Hence, Jesus thought that, as he had *healing* powers, he must, of course, have *forgiving* powers :—for, was not curing the disease a remission of the penalty of the sin? This is another striking illustration of how fully Jesus was imbued with the simple and primitive ideas of his time and class.

Seventh. The next “marvellous work” is found in the same chapter, and consists of the alleged cure of a woman “diseased with an issue of blood twelve years,” by her touching his garments. Upon being thus touched, Jesus turned and said—“Daughter, be of good comfort,

thy faith hath made thee whole." The writer then tells us that "the woman was made whole from that hour." A moment's consideration must show that this assertion of a cure must have been the mere inference or conclusion of the writer or of his informants. And we are not only furnished with no facts showing any opportunities for forming an opinion about the matter, but the nature of the facts and circumstances are violently presumptive that even the disciples who might have been present had no means of knowing the cure which was presumed and reported. The woman approached and touched Jesus as he passed on to see another patient. He turned and spoke to her and passed on. The woman herself said nothing about so delicate an infirmity or its cure, nor was anything else said to her. No one could tell, on the public road, what immediate effect was produced, not even the woman herself ; while her future condition or cure could only be determined by time. The whole case shows, that here, as in other cases, the followers of Jesus *assumed* the success of his powers and virtues from the sole fact that he exerted them. There occurred in this case, not a single fact from which a cure could be inferred, nor is there a hint that the woman spoke then of her cure or that she was ever heard from afterwards ; while the nature of the disease would forbid any discussion or examination of the matter by the witnesses. Jesus *said*, "thy faith hath made thee whole"—and *of course* the woman *was* whole. Such were the modes of believing and of asserting, and such were the miracles which were believed and asserted, by those simple and sanguine believers in Jesus. The case proves but two things—the woman's hopes of relief, and the accepted

notion as to the *source* from which his healing virtue emanated,—namely, from his *body*; since the woman intended to touch him secretly, believing that to be sufficient without his knowing anything about it. His body was regarded as being a kind of charm or fetich with healing virtue in it, just as his *name* afterwards came to be regarded as having cabalistic power, in itself.

Eighth. The next miracle is recited in the same chapter, and consists of the alleged cure or resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. The recitals of this occurrence are admirable examples of the characteristic care and reliability of those who furnish us our gospel evidence, and of the manner in which miracles were gotten up and reported in those days. This is claimed as an instance of his bringing the dead to life. According to Matthew, the father, on coming to Jesus, said “my daughter is even now dead.” Mark has the same matter thus—“my little daughter lieth at the *point of death*.” This difference between being actually *dead* and being at the *point of death* makes all the difference in the world between the effects of these two accounts. It changes the operation from a miracle to no miracle—from making one live who was dead, and making one better who was still living. Mark, or some interpreter, has improved his account by adding that they were told on the way that she was dead. Jesus himself, however, puts this whole matter at rest. Having, doubtlessly, inquired of the father as to the symptoms or nature of

the disease, as they were on their way to see the girl, he twice declared that it was not a case of death, but that the girl only *slept*; meaning, doubtlessly, that she was in a state of lethargic or cataleptic sleep, or something beyond ordinary repose. What are we to say then? Did Jesus plainly tell the truth? or, Did he plainly tell a direct and positive untruth? Are we to presume that Jesus lied, in order that we may prove one of his asserted miracles?

But the singular features of these accounts do not end here. Matthew says that, "When the people were put forth, he (Jesus) went in and took her by the hand and the maid arose." Mark says, that he took with him into the girl's room three of his disciples and the girl's parents, which would seem to conflict with Matthew's account;—the latter clearly implying that the people were turned out to allow the physician to see her alone. But, What, according to Jesus' statement of her condition, occurred? Simply, that Jesus succeeded in awakening this sleeping girl from her abnormal sleep. This was all. What was the matter with her, or what became of her is not even referred to. There is not miracle enough here to detain us.

Ninth. The next miracle is found in the same chapter. Two blind men, it is said, came to him and asked to be healed. And, on being assured that they had faith in Jesus, he touched their eyes and said, "according to your faith be it unto you;" and it is said their "eyes

were opened"—that is, their sight was restored. While Jesus uses here his accustomed remedy of putting their eyes in contact with his body, he evidently had not the faith in its efficacy which he had in cases of more evidently nervous origin. He used other physical remedies in eye-diseases, as we find, and he here exhibits a caution not customary in strictly nervous diseases. He interrogated these men, specially, as to whether they *believed* he could cure them, and took the precaution to announce their cure *conditionally*. If they were not relieved there would be no difficulty:—it was their lack of faith. He also took the precaution, as in the case of leprosy, to "straightly charge them" to "see that no man know it." He evidently did not desire to get a reputation for healing such diseases.

We have here, also, the same difficulties, so constantly met with, as to the real condition of the men's eyes both before and after the operation. The writer says they were blind, but so he had just represented Jairus' daughter as *dead*, when Mark represents her, at the same moment, as only on the "point of death," and when Jesus positively averred that she was *not* dead. The writer gives no fact by which it can be even inferred that he either knew, was informed, or could reasonably be supposed to be informed, as to their condition or cure. There were no witnesses present, and the men were "straightly enjoined" to tell it to "*no* man." Surely we cannot rely upon such evidence to prove a miracle. If these men had been allowed to tell of the matter, might we not have found that Jesus really performed other physical operations upon their eyes, as we know he did in other cases where the eye, ear or

tongue were concerned? May not the desire to conceal these ordinary operations, and his necessity of using them, have been the chief motive for his injunction of secrecy? and may not they have been the very matter which was to be so "straightly" guarded from leaking out? Can any one suggest even a plausible motive which is consistent with the *assumed* character and mission of Jesus, why he should have desired to keep these cures secret any more than that of Jairus' daughter or others which were publicly performed? And again: Is it not of profound significance that it is just those classes of diseases which would be wholly unlikely to be affected by magnetic and by mental influences, in which we find Jesus taking the men *aside* and operating *without witnesses*, and *also* operating with *ordinary physical means*, and *also* giving the strictest injunctions of *secrecy*; while he fearlessly and openly trusts the mental influence of faith, and the bodily or magnetic influence through contact, in "casting out devils" and other nervous derangements? We find in this case, that these men followed Jesus on his departure from the house of Jairus, where he had performed a feat whose fame, we are informed, "went abroad into all that land;" and that as they followed him they were "crying, saying, Thou son of David have mercy on us." All this Jesus neither replies to, nor notices,—a thing most contrary to his usual habit. But as soon as they follow him into the house, where he is alone and out of reach of public observation, Jesus, without a word further on their part, said to them—"Believe ye that I am able to do this?" and proceeds with his remedies,—whatever they were. Are we mistaken in saying that there is something very

significant in all this matter ? If there is not evidence that there was a miracle performed here, Is there not a link in a whole chain of evidence cropping out through the Gospels, which will lead us towards an explanation of both the miracles and the miracle-worker ?

It seems, also, that, after all this strict injunction of secrecy from their benefactor, these men evidently did not regard it as applying to the *fact* of the *cure itself*, for we are told that, "when they were departed" they "spread abroad his *fame* (not his *processes*) in all that country." Is not this highly confirmatory of the view we have taken concerning these strict injunctions of secrecy ? Is it not clear that they were attempts to conceal the *remedies*, and not the *fact* of cure ?

Tenth. The next is found, still in the same chapter. Here is all of it : "They brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake,"—not another word of it. Here we have one of those moody, silent victims of insanity brought to Jesus. Whether the case was of long standing, was intermittent or remittent, or how it was, we are not told. It does not appear that the man was born dumb, but only that he had a "dumb devil ;" for so soon as the devil was cast out, the man spoke. Right here such powers as those of Jesus evidently would meet with their natural success. Many men have had most marvellous powers of influencing and controlling even madmen, and the difference between men in this regard

is known to be very great. Jesus simply induced a sullen madman to speak when those about him had failed to do so:—this was the miracle! To men who supposed that he had to cast out of the man a living devil that controlled him and refused to let him speak, the feat appeared to be a great marvel,—as showing his power over the very devils themselves. But, I doubt whether such a control or influence over an insane person would be regarded, by any commonly informed person of our day, as being at all marvellous,—much less miraculous.

Eleventh. The next miracle was the restoring of a “withered hand”—(chap. 12). We are told that, after having offended the Pharisees by permitting his disciples to pluck corn to eat on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the Synagogue, where the Pharisees awaited him, hoping to get occasion for accusing him on account of exercising his healing profession on the Sabbath. There was a man present who is said to have had a “withered hand;” and Jesus, not only claimed his right to heal on the Sabbath, but made this man stretch forth his hand, and it is said that the hand “was restored whole, like as the other.” Whether Jesus did anything to it does not appear. The Pharisees seem to have recognized no miracle or divine power in what occurred in their presence, as, doubtlessly, we should not were we cognizant of the whole facts. But the accounts of it, as a public exhibition of a miracle, are conspicuously brief, and have a suspicious *verbal* identity in all three of the synoptical

Gospels in which it appears ; while the terms used by all are such as might cloak deception. They all call it a "withered hand," the command and the action touching the stretching out of the hand are nearly identical, while the cure is stated *verbatim* in all, save that Matthew, instead of saying "*as the other hand*," says "*like as the other hand*." There was no one examined the hand either before or after it was stretched forth, nor was there any examination of the other hand before the feat. Nor are we told that the hand was cured, but each uses the same terms, (with the insignificant exception mentioned,) and tell us that it was restored whole "*as the other*." But, How whole *was the other* ? Why do *all* mention that it was made whole *as the other hand*, instead of simply saying it was cured or made whole ? Might it not have been as whole *as the other*, before ? Who examined, or knows ? There was no precaution taken against preconcert, nor have we any statement of the *extent* to which the hand was withered or restored, save the comparative and rather suspicious one mentioned. And, while the meagreness of the recitals and the similarity of the extent and wording of them prevent us from getting any certain clue to the facts, there is, also, no negating of the facts which would destroy it as a miracle. From the fact that this performance was in the presence of his enemies, there is more reason for suspecting management and collusion here than in ordinary cases ; for the Gospels inform us that he could perform no mighty works among the Nazarenes, because of their unbelief,—could, in fact, do *nothing* but heal a few sick folks. Perhaps a knowledge of this difficulty in the presence of opponents may have suggested pre-arrangements.

There is no difficulty in the matter if we suppose collusion, and the difficulty in, and disinclination to, suggest collusion is much lessened by the fact that Jesus was already in personal danger from the very men before whom he performed, and was compelled to go into hiding from fear of them, on account of this very transaction. The resorting to this explanation, although perfectly legitimate both on principle and from the facts, is not deemed necessary here, as a natural explanation is not negatived by the statement,—much less by the evidence. Of real, legitimate evidence we have not one particle on the subject.

Twelfth. We have in the twelfth chapter still another miracle. We are given neither the evidence nor the recital of a miraculous performance, but merely the assertion that there was “brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb : and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.” This is all of it. The mode in which he cured him is not referred to at all. Surely, to say that a doctor or professed healer cured an afflicted man, is not to assert that he performed a miracle on him. And yet, this is simply all it does say. When nothing but the mere *fact of cure* is mentioned, we certainly have no right to assume the remedy,—much less assume it to have been a miraculous one. Had this not been the case of a single individual, indeed, it would not have been referred to, but have been classed with those

general and wholesale declarations concerning the "works" of Jesus, which call for, and permit of, no examination.

Thirteenth. In the fourteenth chapter we have the first of the famous miracles of the "loaves and fishes." Immediately after the execution of John the Baptist and the return of his own disciples from their tour of agitation and of preaching the coming of the "Kingdom," Jesus and his disciples entered into a vessel, proposing to go to a "desert place," (that is, a retired, uninhabited place,) belonging to Capernaum, — called by one Gospel a "mountain." Matthew differs from Mark in stating the facts about the multitude's following him—(Mark vi.). Matthew says the people *heard* of his going, and followed him. Mark says that "the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of *all cities*, and *out went* them, and came together unto him. And Jesus when he came out, [of the ship,] saw much people," etc. So that, we are to understand the distance was but short, that the people were informed of the particular place to which he was going, and, it would seem, were there to meet him when he came out of his vessel, and that it was on his account that the people went out, although he himself had left privately and by water. We are told that this multitude who thus spontaneously followed him, amounted to five thousand men, *besides* the women and children. Making a fair estimate, under the circumstances here, the number of the women and

children would be more likely to exceed than to fall below that of the men. There would, therefore, have been a crowd of some ten thousand or more persons, in all. This multitude spent the day, in that unfrequented spot, with Jesus and his disciples. When it "was evening," and the "day was now far spent," his disciples are said to have suggested the propriety of dismissing the assembly to enable them to return to their homes and the "villages" to get food. Jesus proposed to feed them *there*; and, upon being told that there were but five loaves and two small fishes to be had, he ordered the multitude to be seated on the ground:—which was accordingly done,—as other Gospels tell us,—in companies of hundreds and fifties. He then takes the bread and the fishes and breaks or divides them into separate rations, both of fish and bread, for each person present, and hands these rations to his disciples, who carry them round and distribute them to the several persons composing the multitude. We are then informed that the people eat until they were "filled;" and that, after they had thus filled some ten thousand people, the disciples went round and gathered up twelve baskets full of fragments which the people had failed to eat. This was the miracle.

Before considering the after occurrences of the day or forming an opinion as to the probable actual object of this gathering of the people, let us pause to consider the consistency and credibility of the Gospel recitals up to this point.

And first, Why did these able-bodied men take a

“ship” to go so short a distance—a distance that women and even children walked? The people were both told of his going and saw him go. It could not have been to prevent those who followed him from knowing his destination or from coming to meet him, for they were not only apprised of the secret spot, but was there before him. So it could not have been to gain time or elude the people who thus favored him. Had this been so, indeed, he would not have left his vessel and remained all day with the people, but would have continued his voyage until he had found the seclusion he sought. His meeting them there could not have been accidental on his part, nor could such a crowd be gathered in so lonely a spot, several miles from the city, without having previous warning and some sufficient common motive. Nor can the going in a ship for so short a distance be rationally accounted for, unless there was some object in taking the vessel, beyond the mere purpose of transporting themselves. For the distance was not only very short, but their usual mode of travel was on foot, and Jesus actually preferred to return by land, after all the fatigues of the day. And yet, all that the ship *appears* to have done, was to go and return with them. The inference is very strong, then, that the ship was used to convey something which it would have been inconvenient, or imprudent, to carry by hand. The taking of the ship was clearly for an object which has not been permitted to reach us, and this is the only presumable object.

But, again: What was the object of this immense assembly in this desert or retired spot? A movement, *en masse*, like this, to a definite out-of-the-way place, to

spend the day, does not take place without some common and well-understood purpose, or source of attraction. The fact that a popular man or performer leaves such a place as Capernaum by ship, "privately," to go to a private and retired spot for a private purpose, cannot account for an immense crowd of men, women and children, from the surrounding country, moving on foot to the very same "desert" or lonely spot to which he had privately determined to sail by ship:—no, not even if a few citizens, or even many citizens, were to see and recognize him as he sailed off. Jesus and his fishermen-disciples had often sailed off from Capernaum in that same way without finding any such multitude awaiting them or meeting them at their destination to spend the day. The attempt of subsequent writers to give an air of spontaneity to this movement, and to produce the impression that Jesus and his disciples had no idea of meeting the people there, cannot command the slightest rational credence.

The next question for consideration is,—How could there have been collected so vast a multitude? Surely, Capernaum would send out no such multitude. Matthew says they followed him on foot "out of the *cities*," while Mark says that, as they were departing, "many knew him and ran on foot thither out of *all cities*." But when the disciples came to speak of dismissing the multitude, they recognized no place near them as a city, but designated the places within reach as "villages"—including Capernaum. Making all proper allowance for ancient proclivities to exaggerate numbers, and especially where the effect is to heighten a miracle or wonder, it is

incredible that such a number of people,—much less such a number of believers in Jesus, would have been collected in Capernaum and have gone on such an excursion, without having been brought, largely, from other cities or places for a common purpose.

What was this purpose? The transactions of the day ought to have exposed it. But upon this point the Gospels are singularly reticent. Mark sums up the performances preceding the miracle by saying—"he *began* to teach them *many things*." Matthew sums it up thus :—"and he healed their sick." Luke advances so far as to say, that he spoke to the people of "the *Kingdom of God*, and healed them that needed healing." John says nothing about it. The only performances which are intentionally disclosed, then, were those of his every-day life in their midst. Why go out to this "desert place" to perform these? If he cured by divine power he could have cured them anywhere and at a word. If he preached about the expected "Kingdom" only what he taught openly in the Synagogues,—Why make women and children walk some three miles to this lonely spot to hear it? What was it he now first "*began*" to teach them?

In looking at the accounts of the miracle itself, still further questions present themselves. Granting, for the moment, that Jesus had power to multiply or magnify the provisions,—How is it possible for one man's hands to go through the *physical motions* of dividing and handing to others this amount of provisions—some *forty mule loads*, within the time indicated, unless they were oiled with lightning? *Where* did he deliver out these

rations? from the ship where their things were stored, or from some place of deposit to which they had brought them? Did anybody, save the disciples, *see* this frightful legerdemain in dividing and handling the provisions, and this appalling swelling of the bread and fish? Could that superstitious multitude be kept quietly seated and eating, in ranks of fifties and hundreds, while witnessing this awful process? Could they be induced to touch, much less eat, the "uncannie mess" while witnessing its unnatural production and distribution? To see one man break bread and divide fish and hand them out for distribution at the rate of about four or five pieces per second, to the amount of forty mule loads, and all coming from five loaves of bread and two little fishes, was a sight which would have produced a general "stampede" of all those who had not already fainted! For this, be it remembered, is not alone a question of the spiritual power of Jesus, but one involving the physical possibilities of his human body and the effects of his actions upon the minds of *others*. And again: How could those men, during the *brief time* indicated, have counted, ranked and located that number of undisciplined men, women and children into fifties and hundreds, then personally supply each with rations of both fish and bread, and then go round and pick up all the fragments? For all this had to be done from the time it was already "evening" and when the "day was far spent" and the time when the crowd was dismissed to go home or to the surrounding villages and while they were sitting waiting for their food. Is it not manifest that it would be a brilliant full day's work for a dozen men, even if they could perform it all in that time?

And again: Why were the fragments of food which were left on the ground picked up and saved? What was done with them? There could be no object in picking them from the ground but to save them. If Jesus could create fish and bread at this rate, however, Why save these scraps, scattered on the ground, which none but the poorest people would use? The motive of economy will not consist with such miraculous resources.—And no other motive can be assigned, of an honest character, for this act of economy.

But still again: Why were those *twelve baskets there at all?* For what purpose did a dozen men, who took but five loaves and two little fishes for their lunch, take with them twelve empty baskets, just one for each disciple who carried provisions, and none for Jesus who did not? Can any man conceive that a dozen men would bring a dozen baskets, under the alleged circumstances, without pre-arrangement and a specific purpose? Why do we never hear of these baskets happening to be on hand except at these miraculous fish-feasts, and yet always find them then and there? and why do these baskets never *bring* anything, but just happen to be on hand, on both those two occasions, just in time to carry something *away*; and that, too, something which, according to the accounts, nobody anticipated would be there to *be* carried back? A true solution of the facts concerning those fish-feasts should furnish an explanation of so marked and characteristic a feature of the occasion as the presence of these dozen provision baskets. Their presence *had* a purpose in connection with the contemplated proceedings of the day: What was it? The contemplated

proceedings, according to the Gospel accounts, not only furnish no excuse for bringing them, but shows that there could have *been* none. They do not even tell us how the baskets came there. But, surely, *they* did not spontaneously walk there "on foot," like the multitude!—nor did Jesus create them!

And again: Why was fish and bread, and fish and bread *alone*, furnished the people? This was just the same kind of food that the disciples themselves had for their own use. If there was real divine power used to create the food, it did not require the few loaves and fishes to work upon. He could just as easily have furnished food from a stick or from nothing, or have converted their lunch of fish and bread into the most wholesome and delightful viands and beverages, and have had tables appear spread with them, as to do what he is said to have done. Why, then, this meagre bill of fare of cold fish and bread, to be served in baskets, to be eaten from bare hands, and to be partaken on the bare ground? Why have we fish and bread (at both these fish miracles) without vegetables, fruits, beverages or any other kind of meats? Let any mortal attempt to answer these questions and they will find but *one rational one*, namely—that they were not able to furnish any other. This was simple fishermen's-fare, and this they *could* furnish, poor as they were.

Let us now examine some of the recitals following

those of the miracle. As to the proceedings after the collection of the fragments John's narrative essentially differs from the others. These variations will be found, also, to be very suggestive and significant. After stating the miracle Matthew tells us, that "Jesus constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitude away, and when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray." John gives us quite a different story, and assigns a comprehensible reason for the course pursued. He says—"then those men when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, this of a truth is that prophet that should come into the World. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and *take him by force and make him a king*, he departed again into the mountain himself alone. And when even was now come his disciples went down into the sea and entered into a ship," etc.

This statement of John gives the first hint for the solution of so many unusual and unaccountable things. This hint is found in the *result* of the meeting,—namely : an enthusiastic desire to proclaim Jesus, king, on the spot. This chief and, in fact, only result is never hinted by either of the other Gospels. With this clue, let us endeavor to solve the mystery of this singular gathering—a solution, as I think, not even difficult.

As this was the first of those large secret meetings

which most conspicuously mark the signal change which actually occurred in the proceedings of Jesus, we naturally expect to find unusual causes and conditions preceding it, which will account for the unusual size and composition of the assembly, as well as for its privacy and for its evident pre-arrangement, etc. For no assigned or apparent purpose, sufficient fragments of the actual facts are disconnectedly stated to enable us to recover the chief facts and purposes controlling the movement. Jesus had been in the midst of his most hopeful schemes and greatest activity for securing the popular support to his own accession to the throne of the Messianic Kingdom which he and the Baptist had been preaching. Although he had not, as yet, clearly and publicly proclaimed himself as the Messiah, the purpose to do so had been formed and had been shaping all his recent plans and actions. His political aspirations and plans had been assuming definite shape and his "warrior words"—as Mr. Beecher calls them—had begun to ring out with firmer tone. He had sent out his twelve disciples to canvass and arouse all Palestine, and to prepare the people for the advent of the Messiah, which he assured them would happen before they had finished their tour of preparation;—telling them that he had not come to send peace on Earth, but a sword—(Matt. x. 23, 34). His disciples had gone forth on their mission and had just returned to Capernaum to report to their master. These returned disciples had also reported to Jesus the fact that Herod had just executed John the Baptist—the first great agitator of this politico-religious excitement and expectancy about the Christ. It is at this point, also, that he was first

informed that Herod's suspicions were aroused against himself, and that he was making inquiries concerning him. Our accounts show that there were present, at the "desert place," delegations or persons from "all cities,"—that is, from the various cities of Palestine, who had been in Capernaum, and had followed on foot as Jesus had left by water. This was a gathering which was wholly unusual in such a place as Capernaum, and was a fact to be kept from exciting the attention or suspicion of the officials of Herod and the enemies of Jesus. Such were the chief facts influencing and interpreting the events in question.

The first question which presents itself is,—Why did all those people from the cities of Palestine meet at Capernaum where Jesus was, and go out to spend the day with him and hear him preach and see him perform at that retired spot, several miles from the town, on that special occasion? Why so unprecedented an arrival of strangers from "all cities" just at the time of the arrival or return of the twelve disciples from their missionary labors through those cities,—about the results of which the Gospels are so profoundly reticent? Is it not incredible that, in the then inflammable and expectant state of the Jewish mind, those twelve men could have visited any Jewish city, with their enthusiastic proclamations of the miraculous works and preaching of Jesus, without exciting such an interest in the minds of some of the highly expectant disciples of the Baptist or in other sanguine persons, in this new and wonderful man, as would create a desire to see and hear him for themselves? When, therefore, we find such men

from the various cities actually assembled in the city where Jesus had remained, and find them going out to a specific private place to spend the day with him, just after the return of his emissaries, and find no assigned or conceivable cause for such an extended ingathering of people from "all cities"—save that which they actually united in exhibiting, and find all of them informed of the fact and place of meeting,—when we see all these concurring indicia—Are we not irresistibly led to associate their presence with the labors and return of the disciples, and to connect their motives with the presence and performances of Jesus? Are we not confirmed in our conclusions, also, when we find that their presence and conduct (otherwise so inexplicable and so incongruous with the impression which the after record of them would convey) become completely rational and comprehensible by assuming the interpretation of them to which all the facts so directly point? Does not the whole mystery vanish when we suppose these men to have been instigated by these emissaries of Jesus to meet them at Capernaum and see and hear Jesus for themselves, and that they were there, under the direction and management of the disciples, for that special purpose? Is not this conclusion, at once, legitimate and rational, and the only one that is consistent with, and explanatory of, all the facts?

But Why this retirement to a private and lonely spot several miles out of town? This unusual place for preaching is also accounted for by our rendering of the facts and motives. This was a politico-religious meeting, gotten up and managed by Jesus and his disciples for

the purpose of advancing his claims to the Messianic throne of Israel—the throne of David. This movement was then in its greatest activity and promise. Jesus had long since attracted the attention and won the ill-will of the official and intelligent classes of the Jews, and now his activity and boldness before the masses and the efforts of his followers to arouse the whole country had awakened the suspicions of Herod (his own immediate ruler), who had just executed the predecessor of Jesus in this Messianic agitation. Both these facts, as we learn, became known to Jesus through his disciples, just after their return and immediately before this meeting in the “desert place” was determined upon. These new facts rendered it both impolitic and dangerous to assemble these strangers within sight of the public and there discuss the Messianic claims of Jesus—his claim to rule even over Herod himself, and to have men clamoring to have him *proclaimed King at once*. And while it would not do to let these strangers go away without an endeavor to satisfy and secure them, it became necessary to do so with prudence and privacy. To this end a lonely spot or “desert place” along the lake shore (which we learn, from the distance mentioned in the account of the return by water, was several miles from Capernaum), was selected for this important meeting. Having determined this, the disciples and their families made the necessary preparations to secure the success of the meeting, perhaps with aid from unmentioned friends. As the people would go on foot and remain during the day, a chief part of their preparations would consist in cooking and furnishing food for the hungry, to keep them in a favorable humor; for while the substantial

friends in Capernaum ' could be notified to provide for themselves, many others, and especially the strangers, could not be expected to do so. As the secret conveyance of these provisions to the ship and the waiting on the multitude and witnessing the operation of supplying food could only be trusted to his faithful coadjutors, there would be required just one basket to each of the twelve disciples. Both the baskets, and such provisions as the baskets would not contain, would be stowed away in the vessel, out of sight. To have carried these provisions by land was too troublesome and too public. Their fishing-smack was the very thing both for convenience, for secrecy and for suggesting and aiding the miracle. Of course these poor fishermen could furnish only such provisions as their trade furnished and as they used themselves,—and such as could be cooked by their families,—namely, cold bread and fish. This was fishermen's fare, and this was what was furnished.

We can now understand the strange fact of twelve baskets (and exactly twelve) appearing, all at once, in that "desert place." There were thirteen men, but Jesus did not need a basket for his part. We can also understand why these thirteen stout and habitual walkers should take a ship to go where women and children walked. We can also understand exactly why they had their ordinary fish and bread —always "loaves and fishes"—for their *miraculous* dinners. We can understand, also, why these poor fishermen acted, not as if they had a miraculous larder always on hand with unlimited resources, but as if they were willing, like other poor people, to save all the fragments they could for their families at home. The chief scene, also, like all

thaumaturgic displays when once comprehended, becomes supremely simple in this common-sense light. Let us endeavor to grasp the outlines of the scene of the miracle. The fish and bread provided for the occasion is either still remaining below hatches on their vessel, where one man can stand and hand out baskets full of rations, and refill the baskets when their contents were distributed :—the *stock of food* being *invisible* to those who were not looking down the hatches or below the boat deck. Or, if you choose, those fishermen have selected some small cave or concealed angle or *caché* on the shore (with every inch of which they were so familiar) as a place for the stow and concealment of their provisions—a natural convenience which has probably determined the selection of that particular spot for their meeting. Here, as at the vessel, the provisions could only be seen as they were handed out by the distributor, by those who were seated, or even standing, at a little distance from them. The people are not allowed to stroll round and pry into the operations “behind the curtain.” All this has been taken care of. Before the operations commenced, the people were *all seated on the ground at a place and distance selected by the performers*. They were probably indefinitely divided off, by the eye, into twelve squads ; one to be waited on by each disciple, for the sake of preventing confusion ; the squads numbering between fifty and a hundred, and making an assembly of nearer one, than five, thousand people. No one can see the operation called miraculous, nor was any one invited to inspect it, nor was there any proceeding which was not under the direction and control of the performers. The people were ordered to be seated

in such manner as suited the managers, and they there eat what was brought to them and believed what was told them. Beyond this, so far as the accounts themselves show, they neither did, nor saw anything. The only marvel to them was—how so much provision came there. It was unexpected. They were allowed to hear a brief dialogue between the performers about there being but “five loaves and two little fishes” and to witness the stereotyped “astonishment” of the assistants at the wonderful proposal of their master, by way of reminder and example of the real astonishment they themselves ought to feel at the results. In other words, they were indirectly *told* that there were but two fishes and five loaves of bread present, through means of this confidential chat among the actors; and they never thought of questioning and examining as to the truth of the matter. Such a crowd of ignorant, undeveloped and hungry people listen, and gape, and wonder, and believe, and eat: they do not question, criticize or investigate. Even now, when a mere juggler steps upon the stage (as I have witnessed), and says he holds a pack of cards in his hands, no one stops to suspect that they are *not* an ordinary pack of cards. And, when he allows them to select any card from the pack and then tells them that it is the “five of clubs,” they wonder how he possibly could know it. But their astonishment is still greater, at their own stupidity, when the performer, who has agreed to expose his own tricks, shows them the cards, and they find that they are *not* an ordinary pack of cards, but are all “fives of clubs.” The gaping crowd rarely think about the matter other than they are told, and when they try to do so they always think too late or

at the wrong place. They usually allow the real source of the deception to pass before they are aroused to think at all.

This miracle has been thus noticed at some length, not only on account of its apparent magnitude and the numbers present, but chiefly on account of the light which it throws upon the political schemes and movements of Jesus. These must now be gathered, indeed, from the Gospels; but they must be gathered in defiance, as it were, of the purposes of their authors. After the utter and contemptible failure of the efforts of Jesus to become "King of the Jews," and after they had brought him to an ignominious crucifixion for attempting it, there was no longer a possibility of defending his pretensions to be the Messiah—the triumphant successor of the royal David, whom the Jews were expecting. To speak of these efforts and pretensions was to bring up a picture of humiliating failure, ridicule and disgrace—a failure over which Jesus had, himself, wept. The only hope left, rested on his supposed resurrection. The new assurance of immortality which this was supposed to furnish, and his moral, religious and popular social doctrines were the elements upon which the subsequent church and faith were built. It became necessary, thenceforth, to ignore, suppress or modify all his political aspirations, purposes and movements, as far as it was possible for them to do so; and to remould his life, character, designs and actions on the new model of a "*Divine Saviour*," as a substitute for the original one

of an aspirant for the Messianic throne of Israel, and one who had openly disclaimed having a mission to any people save the Israelites. Hence it is that his early boyish life and manhood are wholly ignored, and that we have no connected account of his public life and purposes, but only disjointed fragments of them,—mainly such as were deemed necessary or proper to the introduction of his teachings and miracles and to show his known and final fate. Thus the whole latter part of a public career which was devoted to the attainment of the throne of Judea, and which culminated in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem as “King of the Jews” and his crucifixion for this very act of treason against the Roman government, upon his own confession, is only known to us as it can be gathered from such fragments as it was deemed necessary to relate for other purposes and such facts or incidents as it was found difficult, or deemed unnecessary, to suppress or change. Hence it is, that his emissaries, twelve at one time and seventy at another, traversed all Palestine to arouse and prepare the people to accept and support his claims to the Messiahship, and yet we hear nothing of their manœuvres or successes—have only silence. Hence it is, that we learn of his having secret friends among the ruling and political classes, but have no mention of their names, their purposes or their actions, save the incidental and necessary mention of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in the trial and crucifixion scenes:—the revolutionists who had anything to lose, having kept behind the curtain. Hence it is, that we have no regular exposition or discussion of his plans and movements, but only unexplained and disconnected transactions. To have

given such, would necessarily have exposed what it had become all-important to ignore and conceal—namely, his politico-religious aspirations, efforts and failures. Hence it is, also, that, in mentioning such scenes as this politico-religious meeting for the sake of getting the benefit of the miracle, their accounts are so meagre and unexplained, and that they attempt to put a face upon the matter which is so incongruous and unnatural—which is so evidently a mere *mask*. They were really unable to appropriate the transaction and mould or weave the real facts and conditions to fit their new theory of Jesus and his character and designs ; and, in attempting to do so, have only succeeded in throwing together an inconsistent and incongruous story which equally fails to satisfy us or to cover the true skeleton of the facts and purposes which they expose. That we have sufficient left us to recover the clue to the main purposes, causes, conditions and acts, is owing, not alone to the inherent difficulty of adapting old and real facts to a new and false set of characters, motives and purposes, but also to a want of skill and capacity in the writers themselves, as well as to their own inability to perceive their inconsistencies and exposures, and to a carelessness arising from their knowledge of the credulous and uncritical classes for whom they then wrote, and of the utter unlikelihood of their either questioning or investigating their statements or conclusions. From the stand-point they would impose upon the reader, their accounts are wholly incongruous and incomprehensible and often inconsistent and contradictory.

Fourteenth. As the disciples returned from this same meeting by water, night and storm overtook them ;

and they were compelled to row lustily against the surf as they approached their accustomed landing. Here Jesus, who had returned by land, awaited their approach. We are apt to be deceived by the mode of stating the facts in this case, unless we take the pains to analyze them. John says that "they saw Jesus walking on the sea." It is said, again, that "when they had rowed about five and twenty, or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship." We could infer by this language that they saw him out that distance in the lake and where none could approach them save by water. Matthew tells us, also, that Peter attempted to walk on the water to where Jesus was standing, but was only rescued from sinking by the hand of Jesus. Mark impresses us with a different conception. He says that "the ship was in the *midst* of the sea, and Jesus alone upon the *land*. And he saw them toiling in rowing: for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them walking upon the sea, and would have passed them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit and cried out: For they all saw him and were troubled. Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them in the ship: and the wind ceased. And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their *hearts were hardened*." None mention Peter's mishap except Matthew, while Luke ignores the whole matter as unworthy of notice. As the matter would now stand, we should be at a loss, not only to account for the alleged miracle, but to form any conception of where the boat was. Mark has it in

the "midst of the sea," while Jesus *saw* them from the *land*. Now, at the "fourth watch" of so *stormy a night* as this, they must have been almost at the very shore to have enabled a person on land to see them, and especially when they could talk back and forth. But we are again relieved by John. After using the general terms quoted, he tells us that when Jesus came aboard "*immediately* the ship was at the *land whither they went*." The obscurity clears up as we read this last sentence and take it in connection with Mark's account. The words of John are positive and unequivocal that, "*immediately*" upon Jesus jumping aboard, they were, not only at land, but at their *own landing*. What an insight does this give us into this ancient miracle-making and into the reliability of the Gospel accounts of them ! Here were these ignorant and superstitious fishermen, battling with the storm, the waves, and the grim night, while the darkness shrouds the land towards which they struggle, and which they at last almost touch. They are so near that, even in that tempestuous night, they can see their master on the shore,—his form rising above the waves and towards the dim upper light, while the beach or shore on which he stands, as well as his feet or lower extremities, are invisible—are perhaps even below the line of waves and spray, and even his upper form is too dim and ghostly to be recognized. He is standing or walking out on to their usual landing, a fact which they seem not to have perceived, as yet. He probably came out on the mole or jetty at the landing, with the waves lashing his feet. But, as the boat was nearing the shore (and whether he were standing or walking) it might well seem, in the darkness, that he was approaching *them*,

while, in fact, it was the boat that was approaching *him*. This dim and spray-surrounded form looks so ghostly as to frighten them : until he speaks to them and re-assures them. Peter, imagining him to be walking on the water, concludes to try it himself, but Jesus is compelled to reach out and drag him from the water. Peter, however, found no further difficulty when he was once dragged up to *where Jesus was standing*, nor in getting aboard again from that point, as the boat approached still nearer. *Immediately* after Jesus and Peter jumped aboard, the boat struck the landing. Under such circumstances it is not at all improbable that Jesus appeared to his disciples to be walking on the water, nor is it wonderful, that, believing as they did, they actually thought he was doing so. For, although we are told by the narrator that they were astounded at his performance notwithstanding they were just returning from the stupendous creation of "loaves and fishes"—their *hearts being hardened* on that subject, still these men could not divest themselves of their daily belief in his supernatural powers. And that they did not do so here is shown by the instant faith of Peter that he could do it himself through the power of Jesus. With their faith in Jesus, the delusive appearances would at once be set down as real, and as due to his miraculous power. That he should have *so appeared* to them, in the storm, darkness, confusion and fright,—or even without confusion and fright,—is neither unnatural nor singular. So that we are driven to account for this phenomenon by natural causes, and, perhaps, by the effect upon their story about it of that singularly *oblivious* process, so frequent with these disciples, of having their "hearts hardened."

Fifteenth. We next have (ch. xv.) the alleged healing of the daughter of the woman of Canaan, on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. While passing through this country, on his way home, this woman pertinaciously followed him, beseeching him to heal her daughter, whom she declared to be "vexed with a devil." He declined to listen to her appeal, and said that he was "not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To her further appeal he replied: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Her pertinacity, humility and faith, however, finally won from him the expression—"Be it unto thee as thou wilt;" and then he straightway "departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee." The *writer*, however, adds that the daughter "was made whole from that very hour." But this is, palpably, but a mere conclusion or inference drawn from the fact that Jesus intimated a purpose to satisfy the mother, for the girl was not present, nor did they go back to see her; nor, so far as the account tends to show, did they ever hear from her again, but continued "straightway" on to their own country. Such cases are too puerile for comment.

This scene, however, called forth an important expression of the feelings of Jesus towards the Gentiles and his opinion of the extent of his own mission:—views and feelings which are amply corroborated elsewhere, but nowhere more directly and pungently expressed. We here learn that Jesus did not regard himself as sent to any but the Israelites, or as having anything to do with the Gentile "dogs," who now worship him as a God.

Sixteenth. In the fifteenth chapter we are treated, also, to a new, but strikingly similar story about "loaves and fishes." The people are said to have come out into a mountain to meet Jesus, and he performed on their sick. After having remained there *three days without food*, it is said that Jesus had "compassion" on them, and would not send them away fasting, "lest they *faint* on the way." We find the same little prologue performed by and between Jesus and his assistants, as we did in the former miracle, about there being only a few loaves and fishes. We find the hearts of the disciples again so "hardened," that they forgot the recent feeding of the multitude and the daily miracles they witnessed, and promptly expressed their usual profound "astonishment" at the proposal of their master, although there was more food and fewer people than before. And yet they are there ready to seat, arrange and wait upon the people as before; and after they were again "filled," they are ready with their baskets, as of yore, to save the fragments.

This meeting and feeding the people in secret is a part of the same programme we considered when reviewing the other and larger meeting. It differed, perhaps,—in being more of a neighborhood affair, with fewer strangers from "all cities." We cannot suppose that we have anything like a correct statement of the real purposes and proceedings. If Jesus could cure diseases by divine power—by merely willing them cured, it would be assuming a gratuitous cruelty in him to suppose that

he would keep many thousand men, women and children (a large proportion of whom were invalids) out in the mountains for three days, waiting for a cure. It is still more monstrous to talk of his "compassion" for the people, after he had kept them three days without food, and only gave it, then, lest they should "faint" on their way home, and when his bare word would have healed the whole lot, and filled every stomach with appropriate food just as easy as he could create one ounce of bread. There must be some mistake in the account: Jesus could not have been guilty of such cruelty—certainly not to those who trusted him. Nor is it possible to believe that such a crowd could be induced to remain out in the mountain three days without shelter or food, as is here stated. The whole thing is incredible.

Nor can one read this puerile narrative without receiving some very suggestive hints. For example: the delay or time required in effecting his cures suggests, at once, that they required some special *process*, however simple, to produce them. Had the power been a divine one and his object a display of that power, it would evidently have been both more appropriate and more effective if he had healed the whole multitude by a wave of the hand. We are again struck by that most significant fact, that the divine power of Jesus to create food was limited to two kinds—fish and bread; and that this simple diet of fish and bread was just the kind of food that his disciples and their families could furnish in quantity, and the only kinds. On this occasion, after a three days' fast, especially by feeble invalids, one is tempted to regret that the starving multitude could not have had a

warmer and more tempting fare than cold fish and bread. And again we are struck with the economy of saving cold fish fragments from off the ground by fishermen whose master could, not only miraculously multiply fishes indefinitely, but could give them a miraculous "draft" of them from the sea at pleasure; and are equally struck with the opportune presence of those wonderful baskets, which always follow them, whether by sea or land, to these fish-lunchings, and always appear just at scrap-time, when there was no other possible use for them, and when even this use was a wholly unexpected and surprising event to their owners. Here, also, we observe that the people are all *seated*, and arranged to suit the operators, before, and during, and at the time of the operations, and that they are neither invited to see, nor are said to have seen, the miraculous part of the performance; nor do we find the people desiring to see it, or uniting in the astonishment which was so freshly and freely exhibited by those young tyroes—the disciples; but, on the contrary, we find them sit down as ordered, and pay attention to eating their cold fish and bread just as if they had been cooked by the families of the disciples and been brought up by the disciples themselves in those mysterious, but convenient baskets; and, when they are done eating, we find them going right off as they were directed, without offering to make the least inspection or investigation and as if nothing unusual had happened. The disciples seem to have had a monopoly of all the miracle-seeing and all the "amazement." I had rather have the confidential opinion of "Peter's mother-in-law" upon these two fish-dinners than any one's I can now think of.

Seventeenth. In the seventeenth chapter we have the Transfiguration. This purports to be rather a miracle about, than by, Jesus. As there are some reasons to believe that it is a mythic legend based upon an actual secret meeting of Jesus, and as it is characteristic of his methods and proceedings, it may be proper to pay some attention to it. The narrative may be entirely mythic, emanating from an endeavor to appropriate the Mosaic type of the transfiguration on Mount Sinai and to fulfil the prophecy about the coming of Elias and "that prophet." The meeting with two friends and coadjutors at night, in profound secrecy and by appointment, constitutes its real, and perhaps only basis in fact, if it had any. John, who was the only one of the Evangelists who could know anything about it, does not even mention it. Luke, who knew nothing about it, gives us the most suggestive account of it:—we cannot say the clearest, for there is nothing clear about either account. He says, that Jesus "took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to pray, and, as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistening. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which should be accomplished at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." From this account it would seem that Jesus selected his three favorite and most trusted disciples to accompany him; that the place of meeting was on a mountain; that it occurred in the night time; that the three disciples were not

present at, or intended to be trusted with, the conference that occurred, although within sight of the parties. It appears that they were all asleep when the meeting took place, and neither saw the two men come, nor heard the conference; and that, "when they awoke," so far as they tell us of their own knowledge, "they saw his glory and the two men that were with him." This was all they *saw*. As to who the men were, how they came or where they went or what their purpose was or what they said, they had no knowledge. How could they tell that it was Moses and Elias? Neither Jesus, nor the men themselves *said* so; and, if they had, it would be no proof of the fact. The whole of the matter, except, perhaps, the meeting and their waking up and seeing the men in conference with Jesus, is probably a subsequent mythic adaptation.

It is not impossible that the parties had lit a small fire while the disciples slept, and that its smoke settled above and around them and its light fell upon Jesus in a "glistening" manner which surprised the disciples on waking out of sleep. It is not wholly impossible, also, that Jesus or his friends may have spoke some words calculated to mislead the superstitious minds of the disciples: for it is clear that Jesus and these men were, to the last degree, desirous of keeping their meeting a profound secret, and to keep even these "chosen three" from knowing either the men or their purposes. Some such facts would account for what Luke afterwards says, namely: "There was a cloud and it overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud, and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, this

is my beloved son: hear him." This language is too indetical with other mythic annunciations to allow us much doubt of its subsequent origin, and is, with all the balance (save the meeting and possibly the fire) of after and mythic concoction.

As to the secrecy required, we have seen that Jesus only took his three favorites and went to this lonely spot at night, without intimating the coming meeting even to those he took with him, but left them by themselves to sleep—a sleep from which *he* did not wake them. And Matthew tells us, that "Jesus charged them, saying, tell the *vision* to *no* man, until the son of man be risen again from the dead ;" while Luke adds, that "they kept it close and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen."

Can any rational person perceive the consistency of these facts, as told, with the ideas now entertained of Jesus and of his designs and purposes? If Jesus was what he is claimed to be, Why did Moses and Elias meet him at such a place and hour? If it was to fulfil a prophecy or type, Who were they doing it for? and, How was it to be known? That even the three disciples woke up in time to see them at all, was not owing to any act or purpose on their part. And, even after they had gotten a glimpse of them, Jesus tried to make them believe it was a *vision*, and enjoined the strictest secrecy upon them during his life. For whose benefit, we repeat, Was this profoundly-kept-secret? Who profited by that voice from the cloud? The three disciples already believed in Jesus, and "heard" him every

day with blind faith, and believed everything he said, as they did here. Why not have had this meeting with Moses and Elias and this voice of God from the cloud and all this "glistening" and transfiguration on Mount Moriah in the presence of the Sanhedrim and the assembled priests and people, instead of at night on this lonely mountain of Galilee? Why seal the matter from all human beings until after his death? If they were signs and recognitions of his Messiahship ought they not to have been known to those to whom the Messiah was to be sent? Of what *use* was the whole affair? Is this the conduct of Moses and Elias, of the Son of God, and of God himself, in endeavoring to make known a Divine Saviour of the World and the Messiah of the Jews? Or, is it the secret and preconcerted meeting of men engaged in some common purpose whose exposure was to the last degree dangerous? If Jesus met these men, must it not have been for the same purpose that he had met the multitude in private and in secret places—the desert and the mountain? Were not these two of his powerful but secret friends—(say, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea,)—come from Jerusalem to secretly consult with him upon his future plans and movements, and to whom it would be ruin to be found engaged in such conferences with him? For John says that Nicodemus did come and meet Jesus at night, and as it would be clearly inferred, the meeting was in Galilee—(ch. iii.). If the meeting took place at all, is not this the most rational solution, if not the only rational one? As long as Jesus was alive and could be a pretender to the throne of Israel, the divulging of such a meeting would be dangerous to these influential confederates;

and hence the necessity for secrecy until after the death of Jesus. Looking upon it as a secret revolutionary meeting involving the ruin of the parties concerned, we can understand, not only the injunction of secrecy and its limitation, but can understand any little efforts deemed necessary to delude the ignorant disciples as to the true persons and purposes. As a divine recognition of Jesus the whole matter would not only be absurdly useless and uselessly absurd, but would smack of divine fraud and bad faith.

Eighteenth. In the seventeenth chapter we have an account of his healing a lunatic and rebuking the devil,—a case which his disciples were unable to manage. This is one of those cases which are so generally stated as to give nothing but the general facts of lunacy and cure, and which, therefore, furnish no means of judging what was, or what was not, done; and can need no further comment than has been given in like cases. The peculiarity about the case is found in the fact of the failure of his disciples to relieve the patient, and his attributing their failure to their own lack of faith, and in his declaration that even mountains could be removed by faith, and his assertion that demoniac cases of this kind “goeth not out but by *prayer and fasting*.” That is, that the nervous or magnetic power must be exerted with an energy of will only compatible with a sanguine faith, and, in certain cases, requires to be exalted by prayer and abstinence.

Nineteenth. In the seventeenth chapter we also have the miracle of the tribute money. The payment of the Roman tax was a sore humiliation to the Jews, and Jesus was charged with opposing its payment. In this instance the tax collector applied to Peter to know if they paid tribute money; and, upon Peter's replying in the affirmative, Jesus "prevented" him, and contested the right of the Romans to tax him; but then concluded as follows: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shall find a piece of money: that take and give unto them for me and thee." Whether Jesus really meant to pay the tribute, and, in this figurative style told his fisherman-follower to go and catch a fish and, with the money that it would bring when sold, pay their mite of tribute, or whether he spoke ironically or jestingly—as if he were to say (after denying their right), "rather than offend these worthies, however, you can give them the money you find in the mouth of the first fish you catch," it is difficult to say. Nor is it probable that we have the actual words of Jesus: nor, had we them, is it at all important to construe them; since we have not the slightest intimation given us that Peter ever either found the money or caught the fish or went to catch it or ever seriously thought of going on such a preposterous errand. It is bad enough for us to accept the unsupported and credulous conclusions of the Evangelists that a miracle was actually performed because Jesus ordered it, without assuming them ourselves when even the Evangelists do not. And yet, so strong is this tendency, even now, that there is not one out of

every million of Christians, that would ever even notice the fact that there is not a word about the *performance* of a miracle in this entire account. They take the entire miraculous performance for granted. Would they do so in the case of a story about Mahomet? If Jesus had been sued for the tribute money or any other debt, and had replied that he had told Peter to go and catch a fish and get the money that was in its mouth and pay it,—Would they allow *that* as *proof* of *payment*, without a word of evidence that Peter ever went, or even intended to go a fishing at all?

Twentieth. This is an account of a case of lunacy and fits. As the case is more specifically reported in Mark we may, at once, use his account here. A boy was subject to fits in which he fell down foaming. Jesus was present when he was in one of these fits, and commanded the devil to come out of him. But the devil didn't come! and the fit continued to work its course, until it was exhausted and the boy lay exhausted and as if dead, in spite of Jesus! When the fit had thus run its course and left the boy lay prostrate, Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up. This was all. It is not even intimated that Jesus cured him or that he was actually cured. For aught that appears, the boy may have continued to have fits every day until he died of them.

This is hardly miraculous enough to detain us, unless we can find some traces of the miraculous in this un-

paralleled slip in exposing an actual *failure* of Jesus to cast out a devil and arrest a fit.

Twenty-first. In the twentieth chapter we find an alleged cure of two blind men by their faith and the touching of their eyes. It is impossible, from the meagre statements given, to know what were the men's real diseases or what was done to them. The record does not exclude either collusion or the facts which would make a natural explanation possible, nor does it give sufficient details to either verify the fact of a miracle or to suggest a true rendering of the facts of the case. And our experiences of these brief statements have already amply warned us that their silence as to adverse or explanatory facts is no evidence of their non-existence, as we constantly find such facts slipping into one Gospel and explaining their otherwise inexplicable statements, while in others they are omitted.

Twenty-second. In the twenty-first chapter we find the miracle of the blasting of the fig tree.

Like the miracles of the "devils and the swine" and that of the "seven loaves and a few little fishes" this alleged blasting of the fig tree exhibits elements of feeling and character which do not speak well for the mental and moral condition of Jesus, if viewed from the

present stand-point of his followers. Like them, it presents a spirit of wantonness, injustice and cruelty.

It is stated that Jesus, after having spent the night at Bethany—(the home of his ardent friends Simon the leper, Lazarus, Martha and Mary)—about two miles from Jerusalem, was returning to the city in the morning and, of course, after having had his breakfast among his old entertainers. And yet, to make some show of an excuse for his singular conduct, we are gravely told that, during that walk of a few minutes, just after breakfast, he “hungered ;” and that he went to a fig tree to get figs to eat. Now, Mark distinctly tells us that figs were not in season ; his words being—“for the *time of figs was not yet.*” We commence with the fact, then, that Jesus got so hungry just after breakfast that he went to a fig tree for figs, when he and everybody knew that it was not the season or time for figs ; and yet, because he did not find what he could not, and ought not to have expected, he *cursed* the *senseless tree* for not having fruit when the “time of figs was not yet,” so that on the *next morning* the tree was found withered and blasted !

We have here a transaction which, were it as now represented, is painfully uncommendable. They would have us believe that the Son of God—nay, more, the incarnate God himself, “by whom all things were made,” who fed thousands at his mere will, and who had voluntarily fasted forty days, who could make every citron, olive and fig tree in the land groan under its weight of ripe fruit by his mere volition and could command “forty legions of angels” to his assistance,—they would

have us believe, we say, that such a Divine Being flew into a rage and cursed a senseless tree for not bearing fruit *out of season*—for being what he had made it! There may be millions of people who can recognize their God in such a transaction, but they would do well to judge charitably of those who fail to recognize these evidences of divinity, or even the evidences of the agency of a sane and undesigning man.

But may there not have been some hidden reason that “us poor mortals” cannot understand? There certainly were secret reasons of which we are not informed, but there can be none which would convert this into an act of God, nor heighten our opinion of the man. If we are to concede that Jesus did this thing in the manner and for the reasons stated, and not as another mere thaumaturgic effort to advance his political schemes and purposes, then there is no rational alternative but to conclude that the super-exalted psychical states and emotional conditions, with which we are already familiar, had already advanced another step in an unfortunate direction. We should never recognize, in this anathematizer of a fig tree, for such a cause, the young Rabbi who preached the “Sermon on the Mount.”

As to the extent and mode of its destruction we are left in the usual uncertainty. The curse had no immediate effect on the tree. For Matthew’s indefinite,—“presently,” cannot control Mark’s specific, “in the morning,” that is, the morning following. None of them *saw* the tree wither, nor saw the means used to make it wither. If it ever was withered and “dried up

from the roots " we may rest assured there was a natural cause for its doing so, and we may feel some confidence that his friend, Lazarus, knew exactly what that cause was. A little fire and straw would have been quite efficient and could have been promptly applied "as per order;" and we shall have another occasion, very shortly, to find how handy and reliable this Lazarus could make himself.

This closes the miracles mentioned in Matthew, occurring prior to the closing scenes of the drama. There are a few others which appear to be peculiar to other Gospels and which it will be proper to consider.

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS AND HIS MIRACLES—CONTINUED.

THE first miracle which we find in Mark, and which we do not readily recognize as an acquaintance, is found in the seventh chapter, and consists of the alleged cure of a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. The remedy of the Nazarene physician in this case is as singular as it was simple and significant. It is stated thus : " Jesus took him *aside* from the multitude, and *put his fingers in his ears and he spit and touched his tongue.*" This is the remedy as put by Mark, except that he adds that, " looking up into Heaven he *sighed* and saith unto him *ephata*, that is, Be opened."

It can hardly be necessary to discuss the miracle here, where the taint of the "earth earthy" is so grossly manifest. Just what was done we cannot tell. Yet enough is told to show that the performer did not rely upon miraculous power. For it will scarcely be contended that one endowed with divine power would heal a man by taking him out by himself and poking his fingers in his ears and rubbing his spittle in the man's mouth ! This was one of those cases which he was unwilling to treat before witnesses, and he therefore took the man aside and operated on him privately,

and then strictly enjoined it upon him to keep the matter secret, as he had done, for similar reasons, in other cases. But this man, unlike the others, did not stop at sounding his fame, but disclosed his *remedies*, also. The "looking up into Heaven" and the "sighing" and the "ephata" might be set down as acts of faith on the part of Jesus, but they would be strikingly odorous of charlatanism in our day. His anxiety to keep such remedies secret is very comprehensible, as they were certainly very crude and very repulsive; and would greatly tend to destroy men's confidence in his divine powers. And had the men obeyed his injunction of secrecy, we should have had only one of those bald announcements of a deaf and dumb man healed by the "*ephata*" alone, and been deprived of this very striking hint as to the extent and nature of the miraculous cures of Jesus. Miraculous power can require no such aids or remedies as were used here, and when the healer resorts to them it is conclusive proof that he is conscious of needing them. For no man would use such repulsive remedies, or *any* remedies, if he knew he had the power of healing them by a mere act of volition:—much less would he do so where there was a powerful motive for convincing others that he healed by divine power. To use mere physical remedies, or to seek to hide his acts or remedies, was fatal to such pretensions as those of Jesus.

MIRACLES PECULIAR TO LUKE.

The first new miracle we notice in Luke, is the alleged raising from the the dead of the son of the widow of Nain—(ch. vii.). This is one of the most imperfect and suspicious stories in the Gospels. It appears from the account that, on the evening of the day on which the centurion's servant was healed at Capernaum, Jesus was still at the house of Peter, in that place. And yet Luke expressly says that, on the "next day," Jesus, accompanied by "many of his disciples" and "*much people*" were entering Nain in time to witness a funeral. These people, therefore, had walked from Capernaum to Nain on that day, and arrived in time to meet a funeral procession. Now, the former place was situated on the north-east shore of the Tiberian Sea, while Nain was on the south-western side of the same sea, a number of miles inland, at the foot of Little Herman mountains. This crowd, therefore, had marched, on foot, some thirty or forty miles to this remote village in this unprecedentedly short time. This might well be called a "forced march." But there are other matters still more worthy of notice. There are few facts more unaccountable than this of Jesus and his disciples and "much people," suddenly and without any assigned, apparent or conceivable reason, save that shown by their acts, making this extraordinary march to this remote town. It is still more singular that they should have *happened* to get there at the time of this funeral and *accidentally* witness this miraculous resurrection and then turn round and go back again without having even entered the town, so far as we are informed. For it is

said that they met the procession or corpse as they approached the gate of the city ; and when the corpse was revived, the whole crowd and the whole matter are left right there. The next he tells us of Jesus, was his receiving the messengers of John the Baptist. Can such a strange, disconnected and unaccountable statement as this, be entitled to be considered proof of so stupendous a miracle as is here pretended ? What would we say of such an account of Catholic miracle in Portugal to-day ?

There is, however, something more than mere strangeness, insufficiency and improbability about this affair. If Matthew is to be believed, Luke has been deluded about this matter—a matter which he personally knew nothing about. Matthew gives an unusually detailed account of the proceedings of Jesus at this particular period. Starting at the same healing of the Centurion's servant at Capernaum, Matthew does not say a word about this extraordinary trip to Nain and its miraculous results on the next day, but gives us a *continuous* account of his movements in a *different direction* from that to Nain, and of such a character as to exclude the possibility of this extraordinary march upon that place. He first takes Jesus back to Peter's, and, on that same evening, he has him surrounded with a crowd of sick ; and has him, on account of these "multitudes," give commandment, on that same evening, "to depart to the other side," that is, on the other side of the lake. He then tells us, after some talking, that, when they entered the ship (to go to the "other side") they met with a great storm which Jesus quelled, and that "when

he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes—[that is, the region about Gadara], there met him two possessed of devils, etc.” Now this country lies entirely in a different direction to that to Nain—After performing a miracle here, he has him return to his own side by ship, and perform many miracles, discourse frequently, send out his disciples over the country, etc., and then has him meet John’s messengers, without ever having been nearer Nain than he was at Capernaum. And yet, Luke fills up this whole gap between his going to Peter’s house and his meeting John’s messengers with this single strange and eccentric movement to Nain in an entirely different region and different direction! Luke knew nothing about it, and professes to write only the current beliefs existing long afterwards, while John and Matthew were present with him: none mention it but Luke, and Matthew renders Luke’s account impossible: What shall we conclude? Is not the mere silence of all the others on so wonderful an affair a most potent, if not resistless, presumption against a mere subsequent rumor or belief, without any statement of the origin of, or authority for, such belief?

It is possible that it is an interpolation, but, as Luke only professes to write of beliefs (derived from hearsay or tradition), it may, also, have been one of that swarm of disconnected and worthless fictions which sprung up after the resurrection and formed much of the material of the apocryphal writings and of the traditional beliefs of early Christians; and Luke, in merely recording the current *beliefs*, inserted this as one of them, at such point in his narratives as suited his own convenience.

However this may be, it cannot command rational belief, independent of its miraculous feature. And few competent judges, I think, will fail to conclude that, if there was ever such an apparent "raising of the dead," it was *only* an apparent one; and that, if such a crowd ever went with Jesus to Nain and saw that boy raised up from the bier, they were invited there for that purpose and the matter was pre-arranged for their special benefit. Jesus and his disciples and that crowd did not make that trip *without* a motive,—nay, without some *common* motive or object of attraction: What was it? We have no right to assume a motive which is neither alleged, nor suggested by the facts, especially have we no right to make such assumptions in favor of religious miracles told by religionists in support of their creeds. Nor will any object but a *common* one account for this singular and *common* movement. The only conceivable object which Jesus and this crowd could have in common would be one appertaining to his own performances and pretensions. This is, not only the one conceivable object or purpose, but this is the only one that was attained or attempted. The legitimate and overwhelming inference, therefore, is, that they went to do and see what they did do and see, if they went at all. And yet, the moment we concede this, the presumption of collusion and pre-arrangement is resistless. Taking the whole facts, the story is worthless, even if it were uncontradicted.

Luke also tells us (ch. v.) about a large haul of fish which his disciples caught by following the advice of Jesus. This may have been so. It is neither a miracle to see or observe a school of fish before others do, or to see them when others cannot or do not see them.

Luke again gives us new matter in his seventeenth chapter, about the alleged cure of ten lepers.

He says that ten lepers stood afar off and cried for help to Jesus as he passed, and that "he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests." This is all he said or did. Luke, who knew nothing about it, adds this further—"And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed," and one of the men, who was a Samaritan, came to Jesus and thanked him. Jesus merely told them to go and show themselves to the priests, whose duty it was to examine and determine upon the condition of the leprous, and who alone were competent to do so. The man who was a Samaritan did not even say that he was healed. Not having the privilege, as a Samaritan, to go to the Jewish Temple for such a purpose, and having a knowledge of Jesus' benefactions to the afflicted, and grateful for his kindly recognition of an outcast leper, he did not follow the advice of Jesus to go to Jerusalem, but came and expressed his gratitude to him. Such would seem to be the probable facts, if he ever came to him at all. There is not a word about his cure save Luke's mere assertion that they were cured on their *way*,

and it would seem very clear that this one never started. Of the other nine we never hear again. Whether they were ever cured, or ever even started for Jerusalem, could only be known, even to Jesus and his disciples, by rumor or hearsay. Jesus, certainly, did not know what became of them ; for, when the Samaritan came to him, he expressly inquired—"but where are the nine?" To which there was *no answer*. The fact that Luke states it as one of the stories believed in his day that they were healed *on their way*, when they had no evidence to support such a belief, is hardly sufficient to prove a miracle to us, since such facts are proof of nothing but their own existence. The singular features in this case are that, if Jesus either meant or tried to heal them, he should not have indicated it in some of his usual modes ; and the fact that none of the men were healed at the time. How long does it take for divine power to operate as a medicine or cure ?

MIRACLES EXCLUSIVELY NOTICED BY JOHN.

In the second chapter of John we have a narrative of the turning of water into wine, by Jesus ;—a matter not deemed worthy of mention by others, although it

must have been known, if true, to all the disciples, who were also present. John states that, at the close of a Jewish marriage feast, which usually lasted seven days, the wine run out ; and that the mother of Jesus came to him about it. Jesus, after a harsh rebuke to his mother, ordered the servants to fill up six water pots with water, and it was this water which he is said to have converted into wine. The quantity held by these pots (said to contain between two and three firkins each) has been estimated by Christian authors as high as 136 gallons. Mr. Beecher's estimate is 126 gallons:—nearly four barrels of wine, for a “heel-tap” to a village feast ! When this miraculous beverage was taken to the “Governor” of the feast, he complimented it highly, and declared that it was customary to reserve the poorest wine to the last of the feast when men were “well drunk,” but that in that instance the best wine was saved until the close of the feast.

Several matters suggest themselves in this case. For what purpose was such a monstrous quantity of wine supplied at or near the close of the feast, when the guests had already drank beyond the calculation of their host ? Did the already saturated guests at a village wedding require wine enough to supply an army ? Is not this manifestly boastful and reckless exaggeration, in derogation of the verity of the story ? If ever such a scene occurred, this amount or quantity is, clearly, a gross exaggeration. And again : What was the true nature of this beverage ? We are to suppose that it had the appearance of wine, and we are informed that the “Governor” or chairman of the feast praised it. But, Has not

this leader of this marriage revel, utterly destroyed his own testimony and stultified himself by admitting that it was brought in at the very stage of affairs when men usually brought in bad wines because the men were so "well drunk" that they were incapable of telling bad wine from good? If bad wine had been brought in, as usual, Could he, according to his own confession, have detected it? Besides, Are not millions of men, far soberer than this complaisant "Governor," daily served with wine which they think good, and still oftener compliment, and which is yet innocent of the slightest connection with the grape? Jesus did not *say* he meant to make wine, nor that he had made it; but, without saying a word about it, ordered the servants to take what he had prepared to the revellers; nor did he or his mother, by word or act, intimate that the process was a miraculous one. If it was intended to exhibit his supernatural or divine power,—Why did he not invite the whole company to see it, instead of performing it secretly? Why did he put the servants to the labor of supplying such a quantity of water to convert into wine, unless the water was necessary to his process? Why not have ordered the jars to be full of wine at once? Would not that have been far more direct, least troublesome, and least suspicious? Why require the same amount of water as there was wine made? These questions find no answer upon the supposition of a divine miracle, but are readily enough answered upon the supposition that he was acquainted with some recipe for forming a simulated wine and had to have water for its basis. He had ample opportunity to perform such an operation unobserved, and, if he did so, we can understand why he

did it in private, and was silent as to his methods. The conduct of his mother gives support to the supposition that he possessed such knowledge, and that she was aware of it. The mother, Be it remembered, did not believe a word of his divine or miraculous power. And yet, we find her going to him and pointing out the occasion for the exercise of his real power or art, and, although grossly rebuked as if an intermeddler, she knew his moods and his fondness for such things too well to doubt that he would avail himself of so favorable an opportunity for mystery and display, notwithstanding his rude rebuff of herself. But, Let us observe the woman's conduct, with a view to see what she really did come to him about the matter for, and to ascertain whether she really had any knowledge as to what kind of performance was to take place. If she had no idea of his method or requirements—no idea that something *would* be required, beyond his mere volition, to create the wine, Would she have ever thought of giving command to the servants to do for him whatever he required to be done? Do not the very facts of her coming to him about the matter, when she did not believe in his miraculous powers, and telling the servants to do what he required, show that she knew her son had some *unmiraculous* method and means of making a simulated wine which *would* require other means and facilities which the servants could supply? And, Remember that, in trying to interpret these recitals so as not to make them sheer fabrications, we are compelled to rely upon the chosen statements of a single unknown writer, who is anxious to impress upon us the idea of a miracle. Remembering this, Does it not become clear, that there is, not only no proof of a

miracle here, but much stronger evidence of a natural transaction ?

We have, in chapter fifth, the alleged cure of a man who is said to have been troubled with an "infirmity" for thirty-eight years. The nature or extent of the infirmity does not appear, save as they may be inferred from the other facts or recitals. It did not prevent him from going to the pool mentioned, and remaining there alone. He does not complain that he could not walk down to the pool when the water was troubled, but that others were more active and arrived before him ; although, while waiting, he had some kind of a pallet to rest on, which is called a "bed." The "infirmity" could not have been very great, since he had withstood it for thirty-eight years, and was still hopeful. John asserts, as actual facts, the following,—namely : that an angel actually went down into the pool of Bethesda and "troubled" its waters once a year, and that whoever could step into it first after this troubling, was made whole of "whatsoever disease he had ;" and that a "great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, were at hand waiting for this troubling of the waters." The old man in question, had hopefully waited through many years and struggled for this forlorn hope, but this divine cure was limited to one person, and that one the most vigorous or wealthy,—that is, the most successful. Jesus had some talk with this old man about his situation and inspired him with faith to believe that he could

cure him, and finally bade him rise up, take his bed and go. That an infirm man, under the inspiration and stimulant of such assurance and faith, should have felt a new temporary vigor, and have walked home with more elasticity and spring than he had used in going there, is not miraculous. What else, if anything, was done to him we are not informed, but this, as we know, is no evidence that other influences or remedies were not used.

The singular fact here is, that there was a multitude of suffering people—sufferers whom we are to believe that Jesus could have healed at word—and yet he makes no effort to heal them, but selects out this old, credulous, and perhaps hypoed, man as his single subject. Was this the act of an all-powerful and beneficent being, or of a Divine Saviour making himself known to the World, or was it an act of human sagacity? Why select this particular man, who was merely “infirm,” among all that multitude of blind and halt? Why perform on him alone and without witnesses or observers of his performances? It is impossible to answer these questions favorably to the divine pretensions of Jesus.

And Are we to believe, not only that this was a miraculous cure, but that an angel actually came down once a year to trouble this pool in the “sheep market,” for the purpose of curing only one man—and one, not the most afflicted or most deserving, but the veriest villain or murderer if he were most active in getting to it first? And yet, the Evangelist asserts all this as a fact and just as positively as he does the healing of the infirm man. Were he in court, would he not meet the maxim—“*falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus.*”

In the ninth chapter John gives us the case of an alleged healing of a man who had been blind from birth. The case is one to be specially noted. The case was, manifestly, not one of nervous origin, and one which would, therefore, require other operations or influences than mere faith and magnetic power. Probably it was a film or false membrane over the pupil of the eye,—if there was real relief given. This, in the absence of miraculous power, would require physical action and agencies to remove it. This fact or necessity was readily perceived and acted upon. The remedy adopted was somewhat rude and original, but may well have been successful, if skilfully applied, and was certainly a “move in the right direction.” He took the patient and “spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said, Go wash in the pool of Siloam.” And “He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came back seeing.” Here we have no “sighing,” nor “ephata,” nor other pretence of superhuman agency, but a single and palpable physical operation,—and an operation to which was due whatever cure was effected. The case, therefore, is one which shows that Jesus did not, and could not, rely upon his ordinary remedies, or any mere spiritual power at his command. Nor does the evidence and inferences it furnishes stop at disproving this miracle. It shows that Jesus himself had learned that his mysterious and oft-repeated remedies of faith and personal magnetism, which had served him in mental and nervous disorders, had no effect in such cases as this and many others; and that, when he met such cases, he either added such new remedies as his knowledge and experience could

suggest or wholly disregarded his old mysterious remedies, and relied *solely* on palpably physical agencies,—as in this case. The idea here, evidently, was to *scour off* the film or false membrane. If it succeeded it was, at the best, a case of rude, but successful surgery. It is simply said, that the man came back, “seeing.” How far his sight was restored does not appear.

While the very exposure of such an utterly *unmiraculous* remedy, and a certain semi-professional sagacity in its conception, gives us reason to believe that such an operation took place, and possibly with partial benefit, yet there is a promptness and yet a cautious and cunning simplicity about the replies of the man and his parents which strongly suggests the idea of collusion. It so impressed the Jews who examined them. They would not believe them as to his being born blind, after fully examining the man and his parents, but charged them with being the disciples of Jesus. And, if the account means what it plainly says and implies—namely, that he came back “seeing,” and by means and direction of his own sight, then such suspicions would receive further warrant. For it is clear that a man who had been born blind and been cured by such a process, could not so soon endure the light necessary for such a purpose; while, if born blind, he could not have recognized, and adapted his movements to, either roads, streets, or objects. But however the facts may be in this matter, it cannot affect the plain and conclusive fact, that, whatever cure *was* effected, was effected by the only remedy which was pretended to be applied,—namely, the purely physical one described. The case is one that is fatal to the pretensions of Jesus as divine healer.

The last miracle exclusively mentioned in John's Gospel (so-called), is the resurrection of Lazarus—(ch. xi.). As a matter of justice to its performer, as well as in explanation of the transaction itself, Let us endeavor to grasp the outlines of the situation. And as one very clear hint of this, Let us turn to the seventh chapter of John, and read those five first and most significant verses, which are in the words following: "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His *brethren* therefore said unto him, Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in *secret*, and he himself seeketh to be *known openly*. *If thou doeth these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.*"

In this plain, common-sense home-thrust from his own brothers, who had known him from boyhood and were familiar with his conduct and career and who wholly discredited his divine powers, we catch a glimpse of the condition of affairs and of the stimulants which urged Jesus on to more reckless endeavors and final disaster. He had already fled from Judea to save his life, and, for a considerable time, had not dared to return. There had been a time of dread, irresolution and inaction. His fortunes had become more desperate, and his person was no longer safe. The intelligent, wealthy and official classes whom he had reviled, had become more actively indignant and vindictive. The masses, upon whom his hopes rested, were ignorant and fickle.

Of knowledge or reason they had little. From their galling national slavery to the colossal empire of Rome their sole hope of redemption lay in the coming of their all-conquering Christ. This Christ-idea was not a matter to be reasoned about. He would come because God had promised that he should. He would come as the prophets had foretold : but they were not experts in prophecy. The mysterious powers and socialistic doctrines of Jesus had attracted them, but an unpalatable doctrine or expression would produce indifference or defection ; and, unless highly stimulated, they were worthless in the presence of danger. To his enemies they were only dangerous as an excited mob : to him they were dangerous by their fickleness and treachery. They were his sole reliance, and yet, to secure or retain them he was compelled to pander more and more to their love of the miraculous. Without miracles he would have sunk at once into the humble carpenter of Nazareth, and became an object of ridicule or pity. He had neither blood, family, class, nor wealth to back him, but was menaced by the powerful, and was censured and pitied by his own household. As dangers thickened around him, he had administered ever higher doses of his only medicine. His enemies were only kept in check by their fears that his arrest might breed riots among the rabble. A humiliating flight had been his usual and latest safeguard. Since his flight he had neither dared to openly prosecute his purposes nor to return to Jerusalem. To go now, under the taunts of his brothers, was to march into a nest of hornets. Without some new and powerful menace to the Temple party his advent in Jerusalem would be the signal for his arrest. It

was not, alone, his aspirations that were at stake, but his life. He had long passed the Rubicon: and the Temple party had been driven by his incessant attacks and bold agitations to accept the conflict which had become inevitable, and had "thrown away the scabbard." Spies were on his track watching for occasions to accuse him. His brothers were taunting him with the contrast between his pretensions and his performances, and with his avoidance of publicity.

What could he do,—thus conditioned? Was it not possible, after the great crowd had already assembled for the feast, to pass through Judea and enter Jerusalem "as it were secretly?" Could he not, with the aid of his devoted friends and disciples at Bethany and his secret ones at Jerusalem, once more sound a note on the old string which would, even yet, awaken a response in the popular heart? Could he not set the multitude ablaze with a new and greater miracle—a resurrection of the dead, almost under the walls of Jerusalem; and under the awe and excitement inspired by such an evidence of divine sanction, march triumphantly into Jerusalem as "King of the Jews"—as the Messiah, and trust to the effect upon the inflammable mass of Jews assembled within its walls? Was not this the one chance left—the one alternative between that and a final abandonment of his efforts and a life of insignificance and ridicule, if not that of a hunted criminal? Such, from the situation and conduct of Jesus, would seem to have been the views which impressed him, and to have determined him to dare the "cast of the die." And with this determination, he departed from Galilee alone and entered Judea "as

it were secretly,"—as John tells us,—and no doubt smarting under the telling rebuke of his brothers.

His proceedings during this period, however, continue to be as disjointedly and obscurely told as they have all along been since his public pretensions to the kingly honors of the Messiahship. John's account is, perhaps, the completest. He describes his teachings, the attempt of the Jews "again to take him," and how he "escaped out of their hands, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John first baptized and there abode," at least until we are introduced to the affair of Lazarus, which was the prelude to his final effort,—namely, his formal march from Bethany (the scene of this preparatory effort) into Jerusalem and the Temple, amid the hosannas of his followers as King of the Jews. Such is a brief statement of the matters likely to have influenced this affair of Lazarus, as well as most calculated to elucidate it.

The situation and strong necessities pressing upon Jesus at the time of this affair and the place and person selected for the miracle, render it peculiarly important that this narrative should be examined with unusual care and suspicion. The very fact, that the most startling and telling miracle of Jesus—a miracle which consisted in raising from the dead one of his most devoted and beloved disciples and whose house was a rendezvous for him and his followers, in the presence of many, evidently invited, witnesses from Jerusalem—a miracle the most deliberate of all his performances, and the one followed by the most important and decisive step of his life—a step which he knew to be decisive of his fate,—

the fact, we say, that such a performance could have happened under such circumstances, and yet have been utterly overlooked by all three of the synoptical Gospels, is not only incomprehensible, but wellnigh inconceivable, and certainly has the force of a "negative pregnant" against its existence. The recitals furnish the grounds for but a single^h comprehensible reason for avoiding mentioning it. There were present at this occurrence witnesses who neither blindly accepted nor subserviently reported, but who saw the whole transaction and went back and reported to the Pharisees, in Jerusalem, that there was a mere pretence, and not a miracle, in the resurrection of Lazarus. We have but the mere fact of their disbelief and report. But, if these men were sent (as it is almost certain they were) on purpose to report the facts to the authorities and chief men, Would not such a report, with all the particulars of their exposure of the proceeding, have given an odor to this transaction with the Jewish public which would have made the disciples anxious to have the affair forgotten as soon as possible? While the true facts were so notorious and were well remembered by the public, they would scarcely dare to write a completely garbled and perverted account of a matter so publicly discredited; but, as John's Gospel is claimed to have been the last one written, and to have been written at a time when this matter had ceased to be remembered by the indifferent public, John may have concluded to record the transaction, with his own version of it. However this may be, the whole facts in this case, not only justify, but demand, a sharp scrutiny under the full and free play of an aroused skepticism.

As the narrative concerning this miracle is of unusual length, I will quote it only as it is needed, requesting the reader to have the eleventh chapter of John before him.

We notice, in the first place, that Jesus was on the Jordan where John baptized, and that, from this point, it was an easy matter to intercommunicate, back and forth, with Lazarus at Bethany, any day or night. We are to bear in mind, also, that Jesus "*loved* Martha and her sister and Lazarus," and that his followers also loved them,—that their house at Bethany was one of their favorite resorts, and that the whole household were devoted to Jesus and his cause. We must keep in view, also, the imperious necessity for some striking miracle to the safety of Jesus and his followers, who had been again driven beyond the Jordan, and how absolutely necessary, also, it was to that decisive effort of entering Jerusalem as King, which was in anticipation. We can scarcely avoid also noting that, for a faithful and prudent management of a *simulated* miracle, he could have selected no family to compare to this of Bethany. There appears to have been but the three, adult persons—all prudent and devoted. Nor can we fail to note that there was at hand such an admirable substitute for a grave—namely: a "cave" in which one could live almost any length of time, with food and water;—and therefore admirably adapted for a live dead man.

When we consider all these facilities and advantages,—Does it not appear somewhat singular that, of all men on earth, this same Lazarus should happen to die at this extraordinary juncture in the fortunes of his Master—at this luckiest of all moments, and should have

been put away in this closed "cave," under the direction of that Mary and her sister who had anointed Jesus' feet with precious ointment from a box of alabaster?—and that he should have had no indiscreet children or servants—(for Martha did her own housework)—to disturb his dying hours or tattle about the death scene and burial? But let us not fail also to remark that, had this been a *genuine* miracle, it would, on account of these very facts and facilities indicating design and collusion, have been far better for Jesus to have resurrected anybody else in Judea, at this critical juncture, than Lazarus;—far better, also, to have had a less suspicious grave than the "cave" at Bethany, and far better to have had the whole matter under any other management than these devoted female disciples, and to have had the corpse examined, and the miraculous operation occur openly and under the special inspection of his most intelligent opponents. Nor can we fail to perceive that the facts as presented, do in fact exhibit an almost miraculous concurrence of events and conditions—(if they were not preconcerted)—presenting the *best possible conditions* and the *strongest possible motives* for arranging and executing, without detection, a simulated miracle; and, for that very reason, the *worst possible ones* for securing its acceptance as a *genuine* miracle by any intelligent person. These, surely, are undeniable truths.

If we credit the story at all, the essential question here is,—Was Lazarus dead? It is due to Jesus to first con-

sider what was his own private opinion about that matter—an opinion which, fortunately, we are enabled still to read; for the intermeddlers with the Gospels have made a fatal mistake in their “doctoring” of this narrative, by attempting to “amend” instead of to “strike out.” Jesus, in important and confidential matters, had rarely, if ever, trusted any of his disciples save the favorite three,—Peter, James and John. A powerful motive (and perhaps a knowledge that it might be impossible to blind them as to the facts), induced him to extend an unusual confidence to all his disciples, in this matter. He knew it would send a genuine and deathly sorrow into the hearts of his devoted followers to announce to them the death of, or any real danger to, their beloved friend Lazarus. Had there been any real fears of his dying they would have, with one voice, besought Jesus to fly to his relief. And, had he neglected to do so, their confidence in him would have been forever shaken. Jesus, being well advised of their feelings, as well as of the real nature of what was to occur, determined to be frank with them. When, therefore, the message came to him—“he whom thou lovest is sick,” Jesus told his disciples that “This sickness is *not unto death*, but for the glory of God, that the *Son of God might be glorified thereby*.” Here, then, is a voluntary and positive declaration that Lazarus would *not die*. There is no word here which it is possible to make either obscure or equivocal, and, if Lazarus *did* die, he did that which Jesus had positively asserted he would *not* do. His assertion is not only unmistakable, but he proceeds to show that he meant what he said, by assuring them that the sickness of Lazarus was for a special object, and by frankly

declaring what the real object was,—namely, “that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” But, Whom did he mean to designate by the terms, “Son of God?” None will hesitate to answer,—“Jesus himself.” It was for the purpose, then, of “glorifying” himself. But, What exaltation did he refer to, or expect to secure by its aid? Was it not, plainly and manifestly, the glory of acquiring the Messianic throne which he entered into Jerusalem to establish *just after this miracle*, amid the hosannas of his followers to him as “King of Israel?” Did he not take up his march from the house of this very Lazarus and while crowds of people were still flocking there to see Lazarus on account of this miracle? Jesus does not express himself in the style in which we should express it, but he expresses himself in his usual phraseology, and with as definite a meaning as if he had said—“you need not fear for Lazarus; he will not die; his sickness is only to aid our cause.”

His positive declarations to his disciples is as positively confirmed by his conduct. For, after he was informed of the sickness of him “who he so loved,” he utterly disregarded the appeal, and manifested no concern for the death agonies of his friend or the anguish of his sisters, but quietly remained in perfect unconcern, for three or four days, and then told his disciples that he was “glad” for their sakes that he was *not* with Lazarus. It was only after Lazarus was dead (?) that he went to Bethany, and he himself is made to announce that he was dead, and also his purpose of going to raise Lazarus, or “wake him out of sleep,” although he had received no message with regard to him save that he was sick several days before. It was only necessary

to let him know that Lazarus was sick, that he might know the *time* the operations or performances were to commence. How the remainder of the programme would be carried out he already knew. How did he know these facts, unless they had been pre-arranged? That he had no supernatural knowledge is shown by the fact that he had to be informed of the sickness of Lazarus. How, then, did he come to tell his disciples how the affair would end, and to announce, and act upon the fact of death (?) without any further information than that Lazarus was merely sick. As the time approached for him to enter upon the stage and perform his part of the programme, he said to his disciples "our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may wake him out of sleep." His disciples replied "Lord, if he sleepeth, he shall do well." Here, after the so-called death of Lazarus, he fully confirms what he had previously told them of the object and result of this sickness. He speaks of Lazarus as still alive, and his disciples clearly so understand him. Thus far, the matter is consistent and unequivocal. But, in what follows, it is almost impossible not to recognize the over-zealous, but not over-wise, interference of some subsequent intermeddler or interpolater, and quite impossible not to recognize the results of after-thought, by whoever written. The narrative, after stating the announcement by Jesus and the gratification expressed by his disciples, abruptly says, "Howbeit Jesus spake of his death; but *they thought* that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." Here we have, abruptly inserted, a *commentary* upon the *meaning* of Jesus, and the *thoughts* of his disciples. After thus telling us what Jesus meant, it is then abruptly said that

—"Then said Jesus unto them *plainly*, Lazarus is dead." A patch rarely fits well: and this double patching produces double incongruity. Why should Jesus have first told them that Lazarus slept, only to have to *plainly* tell them that he was dead? Why use words which meant that he was *not* dead, and which he knew they so understood, if he did not mean it? If he knew, and meant to say, that he was dead, why did he not "plainly" say so at first?—especially as he had already assured them, in direct terms, that he would *not* die? Why this useless quibbling and equivocation, only to immediately tell them the fact "plainly?" Was it the right thing to thus palter with an affair so solemn as this, or to trifle with the feelings of his followers on so harrowing a matter? Unfortunately, however, the patch, even such as it is, does not cover the whole rent. The interpolater, perceiving the fatal effect of this denial of the death of Lazarus by Jesus himself, has attempted to remedy the matter, in the first place, by making a puerile play upon the word "sleep," and by charging the fault on the disciples for taking the real, instead of the figurative meaning of the word. But even this will not satisfy him,—or, perhaps, failed to satisfy some later transcriber and amender. It was apparent, upon reflection, that the mere *assertion of the author or writer* as to what Jesus *meant*, could not control the plain language of Jesus and the interpretation put upon it by all who heard it, and which he knew they put upon it, without correcting them. It was necessary, therefore, to have Jesus himself tell them that he did not mean what he said,—but that Lazarus was really dead. But the author, in his anxiety to get rid of the word "sleep,"

never paused to think of the utter inconsistency of Jesus' conduct with this figurative interpretation, nor to perceive that his explanation did not cover the former express declaration of Jesus that Lazarus' sickness was *not* unto *death*, but was for the express purpose of aiding Jesus himself. There can be no quibbling about words here: the word, "sleep," not being used at all. These intermeddlings, therefore, have only resulted in exposing the purpose of their introduction, and in making Jesus an unfeeling and ungrateful friend to Lazarus and his sisters and a deliberate deceiver of his trusting followers, without affecting the validity of his *first, most unequivocal and fatal* declaration. These vain attempts to save the miracle has only slandered the performer.

Enough can be gathered from the narrative to judge the probable nature of the transaction. Whatever occurred had clearly been pre-arranged between Jesus and these devoted disciples at Bethany. The message announcing to Jesus the sickness of Lazarus was to furnish no unexpected news to Jesus, but only to advise him of the time of the commencement of the performance, with a view to guide his own entrance upon the stage. His own language and conduct proves this. He expressed neither surprise nor grief at the announcement. Nor did he make any move towards going to his relief. Instead of paltering with his disciples, as is afterwards represented, their intense grief and alarm at the message of danger, not only appealed to his feelings, but placed his own indifference and apathy in such an incomprehensible and discreditable contrast, that he was impelled to be frank with them. He could only deceive them in this matter at the risk of losing their confidence and affection. He

therefore explained to them that Lazarus was not going to die—that his sickness was for the purpose of aiding the common cause—was for the purpose of glorifying him, Jesus. He received no message of Lazarus' death, but, after waiting two or three days, announced the *denouement* of the matter to his disciples, before he had ever heard it himself; and expressed his own *gladness* at the opportunity it furnished him, and his purpose of departing for Bethany. While expressing this *gladness* and showing this utter *unconcern* to those in whom he had confided, we find him “groaning” and “weeping,” when he gets to Bethany—(where strange eyes are watching him)—in a manner which greatly impressed the witnesses. This inconsistency was very consistent. There was cause for being glad, and he might well express that gladness before his confidential co-workers. The case was reversed, however, when he had to act as if he really believed that Lazarus was actually dead.

Up to the time of the resurrection scene there had been no person, so far as appears from the narrative, who had seen Lazarus either *while sick* or *when dead*, save his two sisters. For aught that appears, also, none had ever seen him placed in that “cave,” or seen him after he was there. Nor did any of those present go in to see him at the time, nor were any invited to look upon the body or to witness its return to life, although many witnesses were present even from Jerusalem. The “cave” was inclosed with a stone, and as Jesus removed it he bade Lazarus come forth, without even himself going in; and Lazarus came out, still bound in his grave clothes “hand and foot.” An astonishing feat,

one would think, that of walking out before the crowd when thus bound "hand and foot!" During all this process, so stupendous and divine—if true—there is not a word or exclamation or embrace by Lazarus, nor by his sisters or any of those present. There was neither surprise nor joy expressed by any one, believer or disbeliever. After narrating the fact of Lazarus' reappearance, we are merely told that many of those who "came to Mary," believed; and that others *disbelieved*, and "went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." We have no information *at all* as to the *fact* of death, save through the after-talk of the sisters. There is no statement of his disease or burial; nor have we any assurance that he had been in that "cave" one hour before the arrival of Jesus, or, if he had been placed there several days before, there is literally nothing to assure us that he had remained there, or that he may not have come out every night, or may have even secretly visited Jesus on the Jordan during his supposed stay in the cave. Nor is there the slightest evidence that he was not nightly supplied with food and water, if he remained in the cave. We know, also, of other faithful disciples living at Bethany, to help, if help was needed. Notwithstanding the wholly inconclusive nature of the public performances and the manifest opportunities for collusion and pre-arrangement and the many manifest causes for suspecting them—(such as we have mentioned)—and notwithstanding there were many skeptical witnesses present, there was no pretence of offering an opportunity for testing the real nature or verity of the alleged facts or for the slightest guaranty against imposition. The whole affair looks

exactly as it would if it had been gotten up expressly for the purpose of glorifying Jesus, *just as he said it was*; and without any intention or expectation of having it tested or believed by the intelligent classes, but only for the purpose of reaching that great class which believes by mere report, and accepts without investigation. For that class it will still serve. But were the narrative found reported by the followers of any other founder of a supernatural religion, under the same circumstances and in the same words, no intelligent Christian would hesitate to condemn it as an imposture. And, however we conclude, here, we must not forget that whatever was done at this last effort to sustain his desperate fortune and save his own life, Jesus had excuses for it, which would not have failed to have controlling weight with most men,—and would certainly not have failed with those men who have most signally controlled and benefited mankind. Successful men have been those who have not scrupled to deal with men according to their capacity, and to use the means necessary to the end; and this includes all the founders of religions.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARACTERISTICS, METHODS AND MOTIVES OF JESUS.

It will have been seen that we contend,—*firstly*: that all Being, beings and things necessarily have inherent, definite, determinate, and inevitable proclivities and modes of being and acting in each and every possible state, condition and relation; that this law-governed character of the Universe is established by an *a priori* deduction which is resistless and conclusive:—being true if there is *no* God, and *a fortiori* true if there *be* a God; that this *a priori* conclusion is confirmed by inductive proof commensurate with that upon which all human knowledge and prescience rests; and that a matter thus established is incapable of disproof by mere ordinary sensuous observation, and therefore forbids all proof of miracles,—certainly all proof of them by the testimony of other human beings.

Secondly: That, were the absolute impossibility of miracles waived, still, a fact so improbable as the exercise of supernatural power by a human being, or as the exertion of any mere *will-power* over outside, disconnected and unconscious matter, could only be rationally established by complete and absolutely indubitable evi-

dence of all the facts required to fully and clearly exhibit the miracle, and to also completely negative the possibility of the presence and operation of natural causes. It is contended further, that this completely conclusive, indubitable and exclusive evidence cannot be furnished through the testimony of others, on account of the inherent weakness of such human testimony—of the ignorance, imperfections and incompetence of the witnesses as observers and their incapacity and bias as narrators: that all human experience and reason show, that even the *sworn* testimony of any number of even honest and intelligent witnesses is more likely to be erroneous than that such overwhelming negative presumptions should be at fault:—a truth which, though affirmed by all human experience, is amply sustained and exemplified by the evidence in cases of witchcraft alone, where we find, through thousands of years, the ever accumulating sworn-testimony of hundreds of thousands of such witnesses, backed by innumerable solemn judicial and ecclesiastical judgments, positively affirming this fact of witchcraft;—a fact which a million of witnesses could not now make us believe.

Thirdly: That, consequently, by the legitimate principles and laws of evidence, he who denies a miracle is neither bound to prove, or to disprove anything, nor to furnish or show a natural explanation or cause for any phenomenon asserted to be miraculous; but that the burden of proof rests upon those who assert the miracle, not merely to show an unaccountable transaction, but to show all the facts which could, by possibility, have naturally affected or influenced it, and make it manifest

that no such natural facts or causes could possibly have effected the actual results ; unless, indeed, they furnish, to the party to be convinced, the freest and fullest invitation, opportunities and facilities for examining and testing every precedent and concurrent fact which could influence the processes or results ; and that less proof than this ought not to entitle any such pretensions to even serious consideration, if even a respectful hearing.

Fourthly: That written history furnishes but a partial, feeble and distorted representation of the past facts relative to the life, motives and acts of Humanity ; that these defects in human histories are gross and monstrous in the proportion in which they have been influenced by the partisanship and partialities of their authors ; and that, throughout all human experience, that partisanship and partiality which has proven the blindest, most unscrupulous and most fatal to truth, has been that inspired by religious zeal and fanaticism ; — that ecclesiastical histories and religious writings of all kinds have, everywhere, proved to be prejudiced and unreliable evidence wherever the faith or founders of religions or churches have been concerned, and especially among early and superstitious peoples. We have seen, also, that our Gospel narratives are singularly apt and striking examples of this universal experience of the unreliability of early religious records.

Were these several considerations allowed their due weight, the miracles of Jesus, as those of every other founder of a supernatural religion, would never have re-

quired a serial and special examination. But, in deference to the traditional notions of our fathers and the credit still awarded them by worthy people, we have temporarily waived these advantages, and have endeavored to ascertain the probable facts and natural explanations of the supposed miracles recited in the Gospels, under the supposition of the possibility of miracles, and with an endeavor to avoid assigning falsehood or unfavorable motives, when possible.

Mr. Beecher, in his *Life of Jesus the Christ*, as clearly distinguished two periods and phases in the public career of Jesus. And it is certainly very difficult to perceive how any intelligent mind that is familiar with the Gospels could fail to perceive this distinction. For, while the mind and views of Jesus gradually developed and changed as he encountered the experiences of his life, like those of other men, his public career certainly divides itself into an earlier and a later phase which stand not only distinguishable, but in quite marked contrast, both in opinions, purposes and conduct. These phases cannot now be definitely divided by time, although we may closely approximate the period of the change; but the division is readily enough marked by ideas and purposes. The change was concurrent with his determination to announce himself as the Jewish Messiah—a determination arrived at about the middle of his public career.

The later or Messianic phase of his career exhibits him both in a more intense light and in a different light. He is presented to us with a new and higher self-estimate and with new and higher personal aims, as well as under new and more exacting and exciting conditions and influences. Such garbled fragments of his life, purposes and works as the Gospels furnish us during this period, require, also, more care and insight for their interpretation. They have been both written and changed under necessary limitations and for subsequent and altered purposes, which have greatly distorted and mutilated them, and added much to their incomprehensibility and unreliability. Without a comprehension, indeed, of this change in the character, conditions and purposes of Jesus and a due allowance for the subsequent motives and necessity for concealing the true nature of this change and for adapting the conduct, purposes and language of Jesus to unreal, different, and subsequently-necessitated conceptions and objects,—on the part of the subsequent writers and re-moulders of our narratives, all true comprehension of the actual facts, aims and motives of this period becomes impossible. We have been compelled, therefore, to distinguish these phases in the life and labors of Jesus, as Mr. Beecher has done, and to interpret them from his own stand-point in each, and not from the altered stand-point of his successors.

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There has been some difference of opinion as to whether the Gospel miracles were to receive a mythic or a natural explanation. While I have read little of the

views of others on this question, the facts in that regard have seemed to present no serious difficulty. The pretended, contradictory and useless genealogies of *Joseph*, and those miraculous announcements and recognitions of Jesus, and those miracles *concerning* him, which could neither be verified nor disproved at the time they were written, and which were neither subsequently mentioned nor used during the life of Jesus, nor subserved his plans or purposes, nor influenced the opinions or conduct of himself or of others who must have known them, together with all the feeble and manifestly gratuitous attempts to force him into the fulfilments of Scripture, are so manifestly mythic after-growths, that natural explanations are not called for, even if they were possible. And, while it is possible to attribute many of these alleged miraculous phenomena to misconceived or exaggerated conceptions or reports of natural phenomena, they neither suggest such natural explanations, nor can such explanations always escape the charge of being strained and far-fetched. Being purely mythic they could furnish no such consistent and rational basis of real facts ; and such attempts at natural explanations, even if plausible, are delusive.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the accounts which we have of the miraculous performances of Jesus himself and of his life and character are, not only partial, exaggerated and distorted, but have received, in some cases, the clear impress of the myth-moulds ; and, in a few cases, have probably been sheer inventions. But, to deny that Jesus existed, and was condemned and crucified for conspiring for the Messianic throne of Israel or

kingship of the Jews, or to believe, in other words, that Jesus himself was a myth, requires a credulity akin to that which accredits the infallibility of the Gospels and the divinity of Jesus. No adequate cause can be assigned for the known results which ensued, if these facts be denied. And yet, if these facts are conceded, it is rationally certain that Jesus must have had some support and following in his efforts, as well as some grounds or pretensions by which he won such following and support. But, as he himself neither had, nor claimed to have, the mythic pretensions or rights which have since been set up for him, but depended upon God, himself, and his own "marvellous works," and expressly or by direct implication denied or repudiated all others,—and as the actual results and fame which followed confirmed all this, and specially pointed to his supposed miraculous powers and performances as the source of his pretensions and successes, the conclusion is a legitimate one, that he was actually engaged in exhibiting some such performances. And, as these "marvellous works" almost uniformly present or suggest either a natural explanation or rational solution consistent with the actual persons and characters and their existing purposes, means and circumstances, and often actually interpret and exemplify them, as well as conform to their various changes (according to the true rendering of them), we may safely conclude that most of the alleged performances of Jesus had some real basis of facts:—facts which, if fully known and understood, would furnish their own explanation and vindicate their own naturalness and human origin in every case and beyond cavil or dispute.

We have found that, over and above all the general defects of the record and of the "hear-say" evidence and unauthenticated statements it contains, there are many defects and discrediting features, both in the methods and performances of Jesus and in our present accounts of them, which are fatal to them, not only as divine performances and records, but as trustworthy evidence and reliable history.

We have found such a lack of chronological sequence in the events recited, and such want of consecution and coherence in the circumstances and details, as to cast a cloud of obscurity over a very large portion of the career of Jesus. And even where we have special events recited or explained, the recitals are too meagre and imperfect to satisfy the rational mind. We find a uniform habit of bare, meagre and positive statement by the author, which furnishes the reader no means of distinguishing between the personal knowledge, opinions and beliefs of the author or between matters spoken on his own authority or on the authority of information, tradition or rumor. The number of devils in a patient, and what they knew, felt and thought, the cure of a patient which has never been seen, the thoughts and dreams of absent, unknown and dead people, a superstition about a miraculous pool, and all other matters of belief, however absurd or however impossible to have been known to the writer, are stated with the same positiveness as the crucifixion or any personally known fact.

The miraculous facts and transactions recited, we find, also, to be of a character which generally requires the observation, investigation and attestation of persons of a wholly different order of mind and intelligence from that possessed by either the observers or the writers who have given currency to the works of Jesus. We are, at best, compelled to depend for the proof of a *miracle* upon the observations, opinions and credibility of unknown men and women who never had heard of natural causation or natural law, and who never questioned even the probability of miracles—of men and women who, not only believed implicitly in miracles and had an insatiable desire to witness and report them, but who had an undoubting faith that Jesus could perform them, and who required neither investigation, precaution, test or proof to convince themselves, and who were profoundly and personally *interested* in asserting and proving them. No evidence could possibly be weaker. The evidence of millions of such witnesses in favor of a miracle, is literally worth *nothing*. Oceans of such evidence has been poured forth, *ad libitum*, for Spiritualism, Mormonism, Catholicism, Mahometanism, Buddhism, and every other supernatural pretension which has deluded mankind. For the fact, nature and stage of diseases, as well as for the fact, extent and permanency of the relief given, and for the remedies used, we are compelled to rely upon the bare assertion of the subsequent and unknown author, whose very best information could only have come from extremely ignorant and superstitious people who knew little or nothing of either diseases, remedies or cures, and who believed all diseases were the penalties of sin and the results of supernatural agencies

—people who could neither decide nor report upon such facts intelligently, who had been selected expressly for this miracle-proving, and who were biased in their reports by a blind faith and controlling interest.

We find, further, that these narratives were written many years after Jesus had humiliatingly failed in his Messianic attempts and had been ignominiously executed for his open endeavors to become King of the Jews—at a time, in fact, when it was impossible to look upon his public efforts as other than most humiliating failures, and when his supposed resurrection had not only given a new life and impulse to the movements of his followers, but also had given a wholly new phase to his pretensions:—in short, when he had come to be treated and worshipped as a God and a Divine Saviour of mankind and a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of Humanity, instead of an active aspirant for the temporal Messiahship of Israel; as he had been exclusively and universally considered up to his failure and crucifixion. A new *Gentile* religion was being unexpectedly developed, of which the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were to be basic facts, and not his “anointment” as King and his triumph as the Jewish Messiah; and its godmothers and propagators were compelled to find in his actual and known life some pretence for these new pretensions inaugurated by his resurrection. The man who had failed in his exclusively Jewish efforts, and who had even regarded it as a wrongful throwing of the “children’s

bread to the dogs" to heal the sick child of a Gentile mother, had to be made appear as an all-loving, beneficent and self-immolating sacrifice for even these Gentile "dogs." In attempting to make this metamorphosis in the life, character and purposes of Jesus, they were driven to dwarf, modify or suppress many things that were most important to an elucidation of his real motives and conduct, on account of their manifest demonstration of the purely Jewish, political and temporal nature of his schemes and efforts. From a like motive they were impelled to aid the facts by additions and suggestions and by putting a new face and interpretation upon the actual motives and endeavors of Jesus. It was necessary to force the reality into conformity with this new and wholly *religious* conception of his life and mission; and the disjointed and incoherent fragments of his life, character, sayings and aims which they have used as a skeleton for their remodelled Jesus, have been clipped, plastered and re-shaped by their Procrustean processes, until they are neither complete, concordant, consecutive, consistent, nor rational, but compel us to mine and explore these metamorphosed fragments for a possible and rational conception of their original nature and connections. We are compelled, also, to do this, not with the aid of the authors of this metamorphosed conglomerate, but in defiance of them;—the intent and rationale which they give us, leading to no rational solution at all, but only to inconceivability, contradiction and mystery. Such are the real causes, indeed, of the insoluble mysteries which the record presents even to the mind of Mr. Beecher. The difficulty and mystery did not exist in the actual life and purposes of Jesus,

the son of Joseph and Mary, but in the life and purposes of the re-created and remodelled Jesus, the Son of God. It is difficult to create a character and life, and still more difficult to adapt a real life and character to a false mask. They are achievements which even Genius can only approximate: and the Evangelists were not geniuses. To their lameness and incompetence in this regard, Mr. Beecher and his Christian brethren chiefly owe their insoluble mysteries, the Skeptic his derisive weapons, and the Rationalists their means of a true solution of the actual facts.

We have found, that the performances usually deemed miraculous are not even asserted to be miracles in their narration, and that they furnish no pretence, at least to the modern mind, for calling them such. Certainly, none of the miracles were ever proved or verified, in any form; and it may be asserted, with almost equal positiveness, that nothing is ever stated from which a miracle could, *prima facie*, be inferred. For the narratives are not only insufficient in affirmative recitals, but are utterly neglectful of negating either deception, delusion, collusion or the possibility of a natural explanation. Whether we have suggested the true explanations of the various performances of Jesus is for the Reader to judge. That we have reached the approximately true renderings of the facts we have no hesitation in believing. Nor would our failure to do so in any particular case, argue the impossibility of such an explanation, even

upon the meagre material furnished by the Gospels; since other natural explanations are possible, and there are always the explanations of delusion, collusion and pre-arrangement, which have, in no instance, been precluded or provided against. That such meagre and biased recitals should have furnished the means for so many and so plausible natural explanations as have been given, is sufficiently conclusive as to the nature of the real facts

Without any effort to examine and expose the conflicting and inconsistent statements of the Gospels, we have casually met with sufficient proofs of them to show the real nature and unreliability of this written testimony; while their neglect of important facts is constantly being exhibited by the supply which one Gospel furnishes for the neglect of others. We not only never know when we have the real facts, but we may be always sure that we never have the *full* facts. Their mere silence constitutes not the slightest presumption against the existence of any adverse fact.

We have also been impressed with the unmistakably and purely human and fallible character of both Jesus and the Gospels, as well as of the absurd impossibility of his most effective miracles, by reason of the belief maintained by both Jesus and the Evangelists in the existence of innumerable minute and invisible devils

who seek to inhabit, "possess" and torture both men and animals, and who have superhuman knowledge and prescience, and can understand and converse about most, if not all the affairs of God and men; and also by their belief that human diseases were divine punishments inflicted for men's sins of all kinds, and that the forgiving of their sins and the curing of their bodily infirmities were equivalent, if not identical acts, and similar superstitious beliefs—beliefs which are not only not Godlike and infallible, but absurd and fetichistic. And yet the infallibility of the Gospels and the intellectual *status* and infallibility of Jesus and the truth of his most numerous and most effective miracles are *irrevocably staked* upon the *truth* of these crude and long discarded beliefs! That both Jesus and his Apostles *did* have such beliefs and *acted* upon them, are facts which are so often and so indubitably proved in the Scriptures as to defy all possible misconstruction.

We have not failed to observe, also, the striking fact of the utter absence, in every case of healing, of any allusion to the *after condition* of the patients who were operated upon, such as would enable the reader to know or judge whether the relief asserted to have been given was brief and perhaps imaginary or was complete and permanent. The usual habit of Jesus was to tell the patient he was well, and to direct him at once to take up his bed and walk or go, unless he himself were

absent or was immediately going elsewhere. In no instance does there appear to have been any examination of the patient, then or afterwards, nor does it appear that they remained with them long enough to know anything about the permanent effects of the remedies used. These, at least, were their habitual methods. That they are unsatisfactory and delusive is shown by all experience. There has been a well known exemplification of the real and apparent successes of such a course, as well as its still more real delusions, in our own day. A man (whose name I have forgotten) undertook to heal the afflicted in *precise imitation* of the ordinary manner of Jesus. He performed in public halls, before thousands, in our various cities. The poor were treated publicly and without costs. The wealthy were treated privately and for pay. In his public performances the afflicted came to him successively, and were almost momentarily treated after the style of Jesus and ordered to pass on. The wildest stories were circulated as to his successes. To a few it seemed to have been of real service. Few failed to feel, or imagine that they felt, some kind of relief under the excitements of the moment; and many of their cases were reported as marvellous cures. But when the excitement had passed and the results were inquired into, it was found that the relief, in almost every case, had been extremely brief, if not wholly imaginary. Such subsequent inquiries never appear in the Gospel performances. Had they been made and given us, there can be little doubt that a new face would be put upon even the best cures of Jesus. Without them, we must also remain without proof or assurance.

It is noteworthy, also, that Jesus required the implicit faith of the patient as a condition of his cure; that he habitually brought them under the additional influence of tactual relations with his own body, and required a certain time, however short, to effect his cures. We have found, further, that, in cases not nervous, he used various purely physical remedies, and acknowledged that, even in certain nervous cases, the operator must not only exert the influence of his own confidence or faith, but must have his powers exalted by fasting and prayer. Except in cases of "possession" his disciples healed by *anointing with oil* (Mark vi. 13). Besides resorting to these natural remedies and influences, it would seem that in no *single instance* in which he proposed to heal the absent (who could not be subjected to such natural influences) is there evidence showing that the person was healed, or that any information as to their recovery was ever either *received or sought* for by Jesus or his followers. These facts, showing the requirement of time and the use of natural remedies, we have been compelled to regard as plainly and absolutely conclusive of the purely human character of the powers of Jesus. No Divine Being, having voluntary powers of causation and control, would resort to such distressing delays and such natural and even repulsive agencies as we have seen Jesus resorting to; especially as the chief object was to exhibit to others the very fact of his divine power or voluntary control over Nature.

We have been impressed, also, with the fact that, out of the vast number whom Jesus is said to have healed, we have, in about a score of reported cases, the choicest selection—the *crème de la crème* of his successes; which is proved, even were it not manifest, by the fact, that all the Gospels substantially concur in the selection of these same cases as the proofs of his divine power. We are, then, treated to the best—to the *hits and successes*, to the *exclusion of the misses and failures*; although we are accidentally treated to one failure to exercise a devil that was giving a boy fits, and to a general confession of his incapacity to do any great work before his incredulous neighbors of Nazareth. We are, however, neither told that he did *not* fail, nor that he *could not* fail in other cases. It was simply no part of their object to record his failures. Nor would failures have shaken the confidence of his followers, or perhaps of Jesus himself, since they would not have been attributed to lack of miraculous power in Jesus, but to the lack of faith in the patient. If a patient was not healed, or relapsed, the answer was always ready,—he had lacked, or had lost, faith. The patient or somebody else was always at fault in all cases where he failed.

But it is in the character of his performances themselves, and in the times, places and manner in which they were performed and the circumstances and needs which evidence the peculiar purpose of their performance, and in the estimate placed upon them by those

who knew his purposes, methods and performances, that we shall find the most overwhelming mass of evidence against his miraculous powers. We find only one class of his performances continued, more or less openly, throughout his career—namely, his healings;—chiefly of a nervous type. These he evidently performed with more confidence and with less preparation and precautions than any others. It was by his healings that he had first won his fame, and to them he had exclusively devoted himself until he determined to struggle for the Messiahship. When we examine his subsequent attempts to impress the people with a conception of his divine powers, other than those of healing, we find them confined to raising the dead, killing a fig tree, making imitated-wine, magnifying fish and bread, and to such incidental occasions as were offered for impressing his immediate followers with his power over the aerial and watery elements. In every instance in which he selected his own performance, and expected others to be present, he selected just such performances as were not only immeasurably less incomprehensible than every-day Hindoo feats and susceptible of being readily performed by natural means, but by just *such means* as could be readily supplied by his own followers. In no instance does he attempt to perform feats, before others, which were beyond ordinary human agency or which might not readily be performed through the exclusive assistance of his own disciples. Nay, more, the few feats of this kind which he did perform, with the exception of the wine feat, were, as we have seen, of a character to point directly to the aid and connivance of his most devoted disciples. With millions of miracles always

open to him, which would be above all suspicion of every kind, he never attempted to soar above the region of the most ordinary human agency and the cheapest collusion, and even of these, he performed the very feats in which collusion would most naturally be suspected. He *said* he had power to do things which would really have been miraculous, but he took care not to attempt them.

The times, also, at which he performed his chief miracles are very significant. All of them were performed after he entered upon his political career, and were performed at times when the exigencies of his political or personal fortunes clearly point to their special use and purpose. Had he *desired* to throw suspicion on these performances, the times of their performance could not have been better chosen.

The places, also, at which he took care to perform his miracles are even more significant. His performances were chiefly in Galilee instead of Judea:—a course greatly calculated to prejudice the Jews. The greater number of them, also, were performed away from the towns and cities and from the observation of the intelligent. None of his great miracles were performed in the larger towns or cities. In Galilee he kept clear of the Capitol, and confined himself to the fishing towns and villages and to the fishing smack and unfrequented places. Only two performances are reported in Jerusalem, and both of these were cases of private healing, and were of a character, as we have seen, most suspicious

and most *unmiraculous*. No candid man will deny, that the places selected for his displays of power were such as were least likely to satisfy the intelligent or to conciliate the Jews.

The entire manner of his performances was most unfortunate for their credit and influence. His method was that which was least of all calculated to either conciliate or convince, and precisely that which was most likely to excite suspicion and prejudice. He habitually used *means* to accomplish his ends, and those means were natural ones, and always such as would be readily recognized as those which were easiest for him to procure in his then peculiar situation. For example, we never hear of his feeding anybody on any miraculous food except bread and fish, and never hear of his feeding them on bread and fish in Judea, or anywhere else except in the immediate vicinity of Capernaum—the only place his disciples could supply them. He undertook to prove his miracles by witnesses, instead of exhibiting them to the world—to have them reported to the intelligent public, instead of letting that intelligent public see and judge for themselves. Instead of courting and defying skepticism and investigation, he shunned both. This method in itself, was fatal to all confidence and to all hope of assurance. No method *could* have been weaker or more suspicious. But the *mode* of his proposed proof was, if possible, still more suspicious. He selected for his per-

sonal followers; assistants and witnesses the most credulous, devoted and subservient men, from the lowest and most superstitious classes. These selected and devoted witnesses and servants expected to be exalted through their master's success, and expected that success to be won by the very miracles they themselves proved. They believed that every miracle they circulated was a means of bringing them one step further towards the high positions which they expected in the coming kingdom, either from, or through the influence of Jesus; and they were already wrangling over their expected spoils before the victory was won. By these selected, trained and wholly subservient Galilean servants he proposed to prove his miracles and divine power to the Jewish world, and thus pave his way to the Jewish Messiahship; when it was far easier to have gone into Jerusalem and into the Temple itself and there challenge the utmost scrutiny of the highest and best of the Jewish people, and to have performed miracles which, in number and kind, would be resistless. Nor did the folly stop here. It is manifest that he did not fully trust even all of his own trained witnesses. Of the twelve we scarcely ever hear the names mentioned, except those of the favored and trusted *trio*. He selected three confidential assistants as an "inner circle;"—namely, Simon, whom he dubbed "The Rock," and the two brothers—James and John—whom he dubbed "Sons of Thunder." The "Rock" was to have supreme power to "loose and bind" on Earth, and to be keeper of the Keys of Heaven. The "Sons of Thunder" were modestly content to sit on the right and left hand of the throne of Jesus—the two chief dignities. Such were his more confidential

assistants and witnesses. The rest merely believed, and did what they were told, and acted the part of supernumeraries. Upon the wild, morbidly-extravagant, and often wholly incomprehensible declarations of Jesus himself, and the testimony of these three subservient and interested co-workers of Jesus, were the Jews compelled to almost exclusively depend for their evidence of his miracles and pretensions. With these coadjutors and his nine dummies he sailed about the Sea of Galilee in their fishing smack, and rambled on foot over the country, from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon to Jericho, performing such "works" as opportunities made possible and their interests demanded ; yet always keeping their methods from the public, and following their original plan of proving their miracles by themselves and their friends. Their "headquarters" was at Capernaum, within a few hours' walk of their capital city, and yet we never hear of a single "wonderful work" in Tiberias. Several times he visited Jerusalem, and talked and disputed much, and habitually indulged in insulting and berating the better class of Jews and in outraging their notions of piety and propriety ; but in all these visits, with daily opportunities for healing and miracle-working, we have the narratives of but two "works"—of two patients *privately* healed ; and both of these on the *Sabbath day*, when he knew that the religious and intelligent Jews were not abroad to witness his proceedings and would be greatly shocked by his selecting the Sabbath day for his performances. He ranged the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, yet his sole reported work was an extorted reply to the importunities of a way-side woman. He was several times in Samaria, yet his one reported

performance consisted of a long private talk at the well with an adulteress. He was at Gadara, yet his single reported performance was one with a crazy man out among the tombs, and the destruction of some hogs, for which he was unanimously invited to leave the country.

The Gospels clearly show that Jesus habitually avoided the cities and towns, as well as the *intelligent* public and *incredulous* observers of all classes, in his miracle-working. Those manifestations of his personal influence which were real and natural, but were of a character to be incomprehensible and mysterious to even the intelligent Jews, he was less cautious in exhibiting; and, in a few instances of his healings, there may have been intelligent persons present. But, if so, they were neither furnished the opportunity for testing and judging the real merit of his performances; nor did what they did see at all convince them of his divine powers. The great body of his reported miracles, however, were performed privately or before his select witnesses; and then rumored abroad by them in their own style. Even in diseases where he distrusted his ordinary remedies, he took his patients aside or treated them in private, and with strict injunctions of secrecy, after using the grossly physical remedies which we have commented on. In no case that I remember did he ever perform in the presence of lawyers, scribes or doctors, or in that of either the Jewish or Gentile officials. Even solicitations from the intelligent classes, to witness his performances, were met with rebuke or silent refusal. Nor would he perform before a Pharisee, except in one or two cases of healing, perhaps. He turned out the people when he awoke the prostrate

daughter of Jairus. He performed his wine feat at Cana unbeknown to the guests, and without witnesses. He went off into the mountain and to a desert place to perform at his two fish-feasts. There were no witnesses at all, save the patient, in near half his miracles. Most of the remainder had only his disciples, and, in the most difficult of them, only his three confidential servants and co-operators. There were none but his disciples present when the fig tree was cursed ; nor when he walked upon the water ; nor when he stilled the tempest ; nor when he sent some 2000 devils into as many Jewish hogs ; nor when his three favorites woke up and found the "transfiguration" going on ; nor when the matter of the "tribute money" was going on ; nor, as we contend, when he was performing the delusive part of furnishing food for the multitudes.

In *no instance* did he invite inspection or investigation of his performances, or the examination of his patients, either before or after his operations ; nor did he ever give notice of his intention to perform any particular miracle, so that others might have had an opportunity of watching his movements or preparations, but habitually allowed his works to take the by-standers by surprise ; nor was there ever, in a *single instance*, even an attempt made, by anybody, to investigate, inspect, or test any of his performances. He required to have everything his own way, at his own time and place, under his own conditions, and with his own chosen assistants, and, if necessary, an exclusively credulous and friendly audience or even the exclusive presence of his chosen witnesses or of his three favorite coadjutors. What

would we think of *such* miracles, *so* worked, and *so* proved now!

There is nothing, perhaps, which more strikingly illustrates and exposes the true character of the powers and performances of Jesus than his utter *disinclination*, and more especially his singular *inability*, to perform before either critical observers or even before common people who were *incredulous*. In few cases did he ever venture to perform before skeptical persons, of whatever grade of intelligence; and in none did he succeed, save, possibly, in a few cases of healing. The matter of Lazarus we here ignore as being either a fiction or a clear case of collusion. And even in that case he failed to convince the spectators. At the summit of his fame he went back to Nazareth, the home of his mother and her family, and of his own youth, and attempted to preach and perform before his old neighbors who had known him from infancy. But the Gospels naively tell us that he could perform no great work there, and throw the blame of the failure on the people instead of the performer. They gravely tell us that he could not do his mighty works on account of *their unbelief*: making Divine power impotent because the people who were present did not believe in the possession of such power by the performer! Does not such a fact and such an admission probe to the very marrow, and lay bare the naked human skeleton of this pretended God? His divine power having become powerless before his old incredulous acquaintances, he left Nazareth, never to return. It was a bad place for Divine Power to be at. But his old natural and *human* powers were not so

abashed or overcome by the incredulity of a few ignorant villagers, but stood their ground sufficiently to enable him to heal a "few sick folk." Do not such facts speak volumes? And remember,—these are *Gospel facts* and *Gospel reasons*, not mine.

These manifest weaknesses and defects in the powers, methods and performances of Jesus were not then, as they are now, plastered over by nineteen centuries of construction, nor shielded by the impenetrable ægis of infallibility or the obscuring and dazzling halo of divine sanctity. The intelligent public heard of them and estimated them then, as we should estimate them were they being performed or exhibited by some unlearned and lowly village carpenter with such astounding pretensions, now,—only far less skeptically and critically. Intelligent men, even in those credulous and miracle-believing times, turned from them with disgust. His old neighbors were so indignant at his pretensions and his attempted performances among them, that they were ready to mob him as an impostor. His contemporaries generally regarded him as insane or "possessed." His own mother and his brothers had no faith in his pretensions, but regarded him as "beside himself." His family not only tried to get control of his person, and restrain him on this account, but his brothers, at a later period, gave him some very grave advice, which is of record. From that advice, brief as the record is, we can

catch the key-note to the common-sense public opinion of the Time in regard to his course of action. Their advice implies also a charge and a rebuke. They told him, directly or inferentially, that, while he was seeking public recognition as the Messiah of the *Jews*, he kept himself in *Galilee*, and performed his works there; that while he sought to be known "openly" or by the *public*, he performed his works in *secret*; and that his objects and pretensions called upon him for corresponding evidences and conduct on his part—demanded, in fact, that he should go to Judea and Jerusalem, and there, at that head-quarters and centre of Jewish life and intelligence, to show himself to the world, and let them see Who he was and What he was. This is the clear intent and significance of the conversation recorded in the seventh chapter of John. Such council was plainly right, and plainly needed. Jesus, indeed, confesses the justice of this charge of *secrecy*, by his instructions to his disciples, in which he says—"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, and what you hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops."

Looking back, in the most general way, over the singularly defective and unreliable accounts of these specially selected performances, we are compelled to say that, instead of their establishing the divine nature and power of Jesus, they produce upon the rational mind the most profound conviction that they were *not* miracles, nor

the works of one having superhuman power. Besides the fact of the selection of his performances by himself, and the fact that he selected such as were, at best, inconclusive, while countless others were always at hand which were conclusive in their nature by being clearly beyond all human agency, as well as all the various other objections we have urged, the rational mind is driven to utterly repudiate both the mode of his performing and his mode of establishing his performances. A miracle-worker who proposes to prove his *private* miracles by his own chosen assistants and witnesses, at once destroys all claim to a considerate hearing. When, furthermore, he chooses these assistants and witnesses from the most credulous, ignorant and superstitious class, and for their special individual faith and subserviency, and they become his habitual and trained personal servants and followers, and perform their office of witness-bearing under the full belief that every miracle they prove shoves their master one step nearer to a throne and themselves another step towards the most exalted dignities and honors, and that his fortunes and their own are dependent upon the successful establishment of these very miracles, then the whole matter becomes, not only unreliable, but immeasurably suspicious. When, furthermore, he requires to have everything his own way and in his own hands, and performs his feats in the precise places, times and manner *not* to convince the intelligent public, but to excite their suspicion and distrust—performs them, also, without offering to any one the opportunity to inspect, investigate or test his proceedings, and always uses natural means in aid of his alleged divine power, then the matter sinks below the plain of rational investigation. The fact

that the accounts of most of these selected performances do not amount to even a *prima facie statement* of a miracle, and the fact that they uniformly fail to exclude a natural explanation or collusion, and generally furnish a plain, or a highly probable natural explanation, constitutes a further reason for rejecting their miraculous origin. That intelligent men of the time, and the general public, as well as his own family and old neighbors who were most familiar with the man and the facts, treated him and his miracles and his miraculous powers with utter contempt, anger or pity, in an age when miracles were so readily credited and accepted, is, certainly, highly confirmatory of our adverse decision. If the Virgin Mary and her other children did not believe that her oldest son was the Son of God, begotten by the Holy Ghost, or in any of his high pretensions, one may at least be pardoned, *now*, for adopting their views. His divine power was impotent to impress even the superstitious and credulous people of his own day with a belief in his miraculous powers and divine mission. If the power of Jesus was a divine power, therefore, it was also a *divine failure*—a failure over which he himself both wept and cursed. Failure is not a special evidence of divine power.

THE MAN.

TURNING from the miracles to the man, we find ourselves less sure of our conclusions in some respects. For, while there was nothing superhuman in any of the aspects of the life, conduct or teachings of Jesus, they exhibited singularities, changes and contradictions which forbid us to measure him altogether by our every-day experiences of men ; and the history we have of him is so garbled and incomplete as to add obscurity to our other difficulties in comprehending him. These difficulties, however, are by no means so insurmountable as to prevent our forming a tolerably accurate general conception of his character, opinions and aims. His fundamental peculiarities were neither numerous, nor unparalleled ; although they colored the ideas, motives and impulses which shaped his conduct, and which misdirected and clouded the closing or culminating period of his public career. Always a disturbing, they grew to be an ever more controlling, element of his life.

We think there can be little doubt as to the nature of the mysterious influence which Jesus actually exerted over the deranged and afflicted. The nature of this power has been already pointed out. It was his sole extraordinary power ; and it was to it that he owed his early fame ; and during that earlier period we find, from the enumeration in Matthew, that his successes were confined to the types of disease which might fairly be presumed to be influenced by faith and personal magnetism. In other cases, both he and his disciples used other physical remedies. These special influences,

though perfectly natural, were unusual, impalpable and incomprehensible; and were well calculated to impress both Jesus and the observers of his healings with the idea that he was possessed of superhuman powers, and that there was a divine charm in his very person and touch. This power, in various modified degrees, is common everywhere; and even in the striking degree in which it was manifested by Jesus, it has furnished many examples, in both ancient and modern times. It is a well-known and recognized power,—whatever may be its source or modes of influence. The view taken of it in a case of modern occurrence is aptly, but quaintly, expressed in the report of a Committee of the British Parliament appointed to investigate the facts concerning one Dr. Greatlake, who was astonishing the people by his healings through this same influence. After investigating the facts, the committee reported as their conclusion, that a “*sanitary contagion* existed in Dr. Greatlake’s *body* that had an *antipathy* to some *particular diseases* and *not others*.” Could anything be more aptly descriptive of the real healing powers of Jesus—as exhibited by the Gospels? Such a power he undoubtedly possessed,—reside where or in what it might, and had long known and exercised it before he commenced preaching the “Kingdom of God:”—a power known, however, only to be misconceived both by himself and others, according to the ignorant supernaturalism of the time. It induced him to consider himself a source of the very principle of life—nay, of life itself:—a mistake sufficiently natural to have led modern magnetizers to denominate their pretended science, Biology. This mysterious and misconceived bodily influence, operating

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upon the extraordinary nervous organization from which it emanated, coupled with the peculiar subject and excitements of his passionate preaching, and stimulated by the wild aspirations and feverish expectations of the time and by outside adulations and suggestions, was the shuttle that wove the "uncanny" thread into the web of the thoughts and life of Jesus.

In the then existing state of belief upon such subjects, he would naturally, if not inevitably, have concluded, that his mysterious power emanated from God. For there was no other thought than that it must have emanated from either God or devil, and he felt that he was certainly not a servant of the devil. The peculiar nature of the power would give strong conformation to its divine origin. It was not only beneficent in its influence, and adverse to the supposed devils who possessed and tormented men, but, as all diseases were then regarded as punishments for sin and as an evidence of the Divine anger, he would naturally conclude, and *did* conclude, that, as his power to heal was a remission of the penalty of sin, it was equivalent to a power to *forgive the sin itself*, which was clearly a *divine prerogative*. Such conclusions were not unnatural in his age, nor illogical from his stand-point. That they powerfully, and finally abnormally, affected his beliefs and the whole tenor of his life, would seem to be a conclusion pointed to by the entire facts. This divine power of healing the afflicted, of controlling the little devils who entered into and took possession of their bodies and tortured them, and of forgiving sins, seemed not only to be at his command, but to appertain to, and *reside in*, his *own person*. He conceived himself, and seemed to others,

to be a mysterious health-restoring and life-giving fountain, whose very touch imparted restoring and revivifying influences. The possession of such powers, as thus construed, operating upon the super-exalted nervous organization of a religious enthusiast, would naturally lead, as they actually did lead, to unhealthy and extravagant results—results which would continue, under exciting influences, to grow ever more extravagant and ever less coherent and rational. Such exciting causes and influences, operating upon such a nature, under ever more exacting and exciting conditions, might readily and naturally drive it to wild extremes, and force it into wild conclusions and aims. None of these predisposing causes and encouraging influences and conditions were lacking in the case of Jesus. His fiery aspirations, visionary social ideas and religious enthusiasm had forced him upon the rostrum as a religious and social reformer, and had driven him into the ranks and the wild dreams of the Adventists, and to become the co-worker with the Baptist in preaching and preparing for the imminent coming of the Messiah and the “Kingdom of God,” and, with them, the utter overthrow of the existing order of things and all who supported them. His preachings (as all such preachings do) grew more and more impassioned and threw him into constant excitements, often intensified and embittered by opposition and hostility. His increasing popularity (for a while) and his widening notoriety as a healer brought his powers into greater requisition and added to his alternate excitements and exhaustions. His belief in the divine, yet personal nature of his powers, had prepared him for a belief in his possession of an extraordinary

and exceptional nature, and to dream of an equally exalted mission and destiny. These were the subjects which absorbed his mind in connection with the advent of the Messiah and his Kingdom which he preached. Their association in his mind was so constant and intimate as to result in a *connection*, and his undefined longings and indefinite conceptions and aims began to shape themselves under this new connection. The association of these ideas in his over-excited and morbid mind had engendered strange and startling whisperings in his soul; pointing to a possible solution of the mystery of his exceptional nature and divine powers. Might not *he himself* be that priest after the "order of Melchizedec"—the very Messiah whom he and John were preaching, and whom thousands had been hourly looking for? That seed, once set germinating in the hot mould of such a mind, would grow rankly—as rankly as Jonah's gourd.

These thoughts were not reached in the early stage of his preaching. They were never hinted by him until long after his sermon on the mount, nor, as it would appear, until the matter was suggested by others. And it is not impossible, that the first connection of himself with the Messiahship, even in his own mind, was due to the suggestion of some excited admirer or enthusiastic patient among the crowd. Such a suggestion would flash and flame through such a mind like a magazine touched by a spark of fire. Even after the idea had been suggested and had taken root in his mind, and he had consulted with his disciples, *privately*, as to whom the people thought he was, and had exulted over the fact, that the

chief of his own followers had already caught the same idea (or else had caught the cue from his master), he expressly enjoined it upon them—"that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." This was said after he had sent out his apostles to preach the coming of the "Kingdom," and had said to them—"ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the son of man be come." He had, thus far, then, not even expressly proclaimed himself as the Messiah to his own followers, although they had probably seen and well understood his tendencies, while he was still anxious to keep this dangerous pretension from reaching the public. He seems to have announced his identity with the Christ to the public, gradually and somewhat cautiously and obscurely. His incessant cogitations and morbid dreamings about his divine nature and powers had drifted him into such exalted, but confused notions of himself and of his relations with God and with his followers, that they were inexplicable to others and obscure to himself. To proclaim his own view of himself to the public was sure *not* to meet their Messianic views. He had no real Messianic pretensions to advance, and the annunciation of the wild dreams which had formed the basis of his own delusion, only brought down upon him public indignation for his blasphemy. It was only when morbidly excited that he attempted to expose the extreme belief into which he had been driven. He had concluded that his powers were divine powers and had emanated from God, and yet that they were inherent in his own person. They were God's powers, and yet he himself possessed, exerted and controlled them. Was not he himself, then, from God and of God? Was he

not the *medium* through which the divine life-giving and life-restoring and sin-pardoning influences were poured out upon the world? Having the power of *forgiving sins*—Was he not, therefore, a physician and saviour of sinful souls, also? Was he not the medium and direct source of moral as well as of physical life and health? Was he not, indeed, a very fountain of life, immortality and moral salvation? and, Did not these vitalizing, pardoning and sanctifying influences flow from his very person upon the *believing* recipient? Did not this very essence, as it were, of his own being, reside in the being of God, and yet also flow from himself into the believer? Was he not, then, in a striking and yet strange sense, both in God and in the believer? and, Was not the recipient believer, in a like sense, in Jesus, and through him, in God also? Such, it would seem, was the progressive course of his morbid thoughts and conclusions as he advanced in his morbid mental career. And when under high excitement or driven beyond his guard, he would disjointedly pour them forth with strange vehemence—strangely mixing himself up with God, and declaring that he was the very bread and water of life, and inviting the people to eat his flesh and drink his blood that they might never thirst and never die. He seems to have known that the intelligent classes would not credit these pretensions, or accept them as appertaining to the Messiah, but they also drove even the ignorant masses from him, and excited general indignation against him as a blasphemer.

Looking back at the matter under the light which we have attempted to throw upon it, we are no longer so amazed at finding the deliverer of that radical, but charmingly beautiful sermon on the mount, bursting forth, under excitement, into his morbid vein of egotism with such astounding declarations of his being the source and fountain of salvation and of physical and moral life as to drive from him almost the entire mass of those whom his real powers and virtues had won for him. Nor are we surprised to find that, in his cooler moments, he endeavored, privately, to mollify and explain some of his more extravagant declarations to his twelve followers, and condescended to explain his claim to be the Son of God in a sense less offensive to the Jews and compatible with his mere humanity.—(John x. 33-37). Nor are we surprised that not a living soul could ever understand him as to Who and What he really claimed to be, or upon what he really based his claim to the Messiahship,—no, not even his own disciples. Nor are we surprised to find, that he offered his moral salvation and renewed life upon the condition, and through means of, *faith in himself*; since we have seen that this faith in himself and in his power to heal and save had been an efficient element, from the first, in his healing or sin-pardoning and life-giving processes, and had not only been considered by him as a necessary part of them, but had been demanded as a *condition* of their application or of their virtue and success. He had early learned the astonishing effects of faith in healing, or, as he considered, in saving from the penalties or condemnation of sin; and this prerequisite faith in the patient he continued to regard as a necessary adjunct to his own

virtues, moral as well as physical. It was *faith* in himself, therefore, and not *piety* or *virtue* which was the condition of his salvation or moral healing.

The qualifications for the Messiahship which Jesus presented to the ignorant masses of Galilee, or were extorted from him by the Jews, were not at all those attributed by prophecy or expected by the Jews. Had he been all he claimed, it would have given him no pretensions to the Messiahship of prophecy, however much it might have entitled him to their obedience and worship. The Messiah was to be neither God, nor a divine son of God, nor the divine source of life and moral regeneration to those who believed in him, nor was he to give men his flesh to eat or his blood to drink, nor to raise the dead, make miraculous fish and bread, or to cure fits. No such thought of him had ever been entertained by either people or prophet. It may sound strange to believers, but it is nevertheless true, that not a single qualification or reason advanced by Jesus himself had any application whatever to the Messiah of the Jews, or to the programme said to have been announced at his birth by Gabriel ; while, of the real indicia and qualifications of that predicted prince, he not only never *pretended* to have a *single one*, but openly contested and repudiated the very first and most essential of them. He knew that the Messiahship was to be a Jewish affair, and the "kingdom" which he first preached, and afterwards as-

pired to, was a Jewish kingdom. He expressly confined his mission to the Israelites, and in his commission to his disciples he expressly says : "Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not." Neither he, nor they, were to have any concern with Samaritans or Gentiles. And, if at the last he made any change in this regard, it was only when, and only because, he had discovered that his Jewish scheme was a hopeless failure. It was only under great pressure that he could be induced to exercise even his healing power on the suffering Gentiles, and then only in a few cases where he was humored and flattered. When he had been finally seduced into a conception that he himself was the Messiah, the conclusion had been reached through the subjective processes and experiences we have already indicated, aided by the adulations and suggestions of the crowd, and not from his possession of the indicia and qualifications of the expected Messiah. Not one of these did he ever possess or ever *claim*. The grounds of his own belief were subjective and personal, without reference to Scripture or extraneous relations or signs, and they had been engendered by the mysterious character of his personal nature and powers and nourished by the adulations of a Galilean rabble who were ignorant of the specialties of Jewish prophecy. Once morbidly fixed in his mind, the idea needed no reason ; and would yield to none. It was nourished by the rich mould of the delusion of which it was born. His belief in the divine character of his own nature and powers had been the sole ground of his own belief that he was the Messiah, but this ground had produced, in himself, an immovable conviction that he was the real Christ.

This, also, was all he had to offer to others. As in all such cases of morbid convictions the demands for a reason only irritated him, and incredulity and opposition angered him. He could not offer what he had^d not, nor could he prove his own divine nature or powers, save by his own assertions, and by *works* of a *divine nature*. He knew it, and *God* knew it, and his own divine works proved it: What more could they ask? If the Jews could not see it, so much the worse for the Jews. None but a wicked and adulterous generation would *ask* more. It was not a matter of "signs" and reasons, but of faith; and he thanked God that He had hidden it from the "wise and prudent, and revealed it unto babes." The "wise and prudent" thought that God had given his evidence long ago, through the prophets, and had not been heard from since. To this testimony of God they thought Jesus ought to conform; but Jesus, although contending that the Scriptures spoke of him generally, —(that is, of the Messiah, whom he himself was), would make no kind of endeavor or attempt to show in what *particulars or respects* he fulfilled the Messianic prophecies. The only qualification of the Messiah which he would discuss with them was that of his being a "son of David," and this he *denied*. Although other qualifications were mentioned, and his fulfilment of them denied, *in his presence*, such as that he should be born in Bethlehem, he would take no notice of them whatever. The *only* evidence which he really offered the intelligent Jewish public was his own incomprehensible assertions as to his own nature and pretensions, and "works" which he refused to perform before them, and which they could only hear of through the sources we have

already characterized. He knew that his own assertion was not proof, and, although he quibbled about the law requiring but two witnesses, and his having the two required witnesses,—namely, God and himself, he knew that he really had nothing but his “works” to depend upon before others, and he finally *said* to the Jews—“*If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.*” Here lay the whole matter in a nut-shell, and without equivocation. True, Jesus knew that the Jews would not accept mere miraculous power as proof that he was the Messiah, since they not only did not expect such powers and performances from their Messiah, but they required the prophetic indicia of his identity and claim, and considered mere miracles as performances common to Gods, angels, men and devils, and no proofs even of a divine mission, much less of a specific claim to the Messiahship. But, besides having no proof of his possessing miraculous power, the Jews had no conception of the real meaning of Jesus in this proposed proof. To them, it sounded like mockery; but to the morbid mind of Jesus the proof was conclusive. It was the evidence which he had himself, and which had convinced himself. He did not mean simply, that, if he did not perform *miracles*, then to believe him not. He meant that, if he did not perform the *works of God*—that is, works which he *supposed* no other man had ever performed, and which were the peculiar and exclusive prerogative of God,—namely: the exercise of the divine power of healing, pardoning, revivifying and regenerating men. Could man or devil do that! If not, why not recognize his divine nature and his mission at once, and accept his own declaration that he was the Christ? If they could

not do this, then it had not been "*given*" to them to believe, and their lack of faith in him had lost them the benefit of his proffered salvation, and they stood condemned. This was *his* view of the matter; and they might look to themselves.

Had it been in the power of Jesus to prove that he had, in any sense, fulfilled the scriptural requirements concerning the Messiah,—such, for example, as those of his birth at Bethlehem, and his descent from the royal line of David, no fair mind will deny, that he would gladly have done so, or that it was his *duty* to have done so. Nor will any fair mind deny that, if there were any such miraculous evidences of his divine recognition at his conception, birth and various periods of his life, as is now contended for, it would have been a joy as well as duty to have taken every pains to establish them before the proper and competent parties to judge them. Nor can it be denied that, had he possessed the divine power now claimed for him, or that claimed by himself, he could, and would, have gone at once to Jerusalem, during the great feasts, and have demonstrated that power, to the entire satisfaction of all men. That he did none of these things is conclusive proof, under the circumstances, that he *could* not; and that he was *compelled* to rely upon that which he *did* rely upon,—namely, that which we have just shown and endeavored to explain.

No doubt many persons, swayed by an education based upon the results of a century of moulding and forming the *Gospel-Jesus* and upon eighteen centuries of amendments and superimposed plasterings and interpretations, under the *post-resurrection conception of him*, will be astonished at our declaration that Jesus was endeavoring to reach the Messianic throne of Israel. And yet, to deny it, is in plain contravention of the whole current of Gospel facts—is to render his life, not only the mystery which Mr. Beecher confesses it to be, but is to render it a tissue of unmeaning endeavors and absurd contradictions. To say that his political doctrines, aspirations and aims were a part of his religious ones, is but to say that he was a Jew; but it is nevertheless impossible to eradicate or rationally ignore their existence; while it is equally impossible to suppose, that they were entertained and prosecuted with a pre-knowledge and purpose that they should end in failure and in his own crucifixion. Let those who can read the Gospels and still doubt this, seriously answer to their own consciences the following questions. If Jesus was not aiming for the temporal Messianic throne of Israel, for what object were all his own personal exertions and the organized efforts of his followers? Did he really *desire* the Jewish people to accept him as their Messiah or did he desire them to reject him? If he desired them to accept him, Did he make no real efforts to secure that acceptance? If he did desire and strive for that end, What did he suppose the result of such a recognition would be? Did he not know, that there could be but *one* result, namely: that they would anoint him as Christ and crown him as King? Did he labor, and make his disciples labor, for years, for

a recognition which he knew to be impossible and wished to avoid? or, Did he do all this on purpose to fail and be crucified? If his object was to get crucified for the sins of all men, or of believers, why did he confine his projects and efforts to the Israelites, to the exclusion of all others? Why send out large bands of his followers to arouse the *Jewish* people, and none others, for the *immediate* reception of the "Kingdom of God," if that kingdom was to be a kingdom of ghosts, of all kinds of people, in the *other world*? Why did he finally have himself proclaimed king, and ride into Jerusalem in triumphant procession, amid shouts of—"Hosanna to the Son of David," and upon an ass, that he might avail himself of a prophecy, saying—"Behold thy *king* cometh sitting on an ass?" If he neither was, nor intended to be, their king, How could he fulfil a prophecy which required that he *should* be king? If Jesus did not desire and hope that the Jews would accept him as their Messiah, Why did he alternately weep and curse over his failures and rejection? and Why did he exclaim "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not?" or Was it in the other world that he would have gathered them and that they refused? Why did he confess on his trial that he was King of the Jews, and refuse to retract it, knowing that his confession must consign him to a punishment the very thought of which had made him sweat blood, if he did not know that he had gone so far that all denial was useless? His disciples who had followed his footsteps for three-years, who had heard all he said and all his explanations and all his plans and instructions, and who

had entered into and aided all his schemes, believed, up to the last, that he was aiming for a temporal throne. Until after the resurrection, not one of them ever suspected that there was any other purpose ; while all supposed that his crucifixion was the end of the whole matter. Could these twelve men have been so utterly stupid, that Jesus could never awaken, in one of them, a single suspicion of his true purpose in all this time ? Or was he wilfully deceiving them, knowing what they thought and expected ? If these men, and all men who knew him, understood him to be aiming to become king, and he had spoken and acted in a manner to make everybody believe it, and had had himself publicly proclaimed as king, and had been tried for it, and confessed his guilt, and was executed for it with the title of " King of the Jews " above his head, Could all this about being king have been a pre-intended delusion and a lie, known only by Jesus, and wilfully and delusively encouraged and concealed by him ? Further suggestions would be useless. Those who can read and reflect upon those already made, in connection with what has heretofore been said on this subject, and still believe that Jesus neither sought, nor expected, temporal recognition and power, are hopelessly " joined to their idols."

We have found Jesus having given evidence of the possession of an extraordinary physical organization, one endowed with wonderful magnetic power and a highly exalted, sympathetic and excitable nervous system ; and have seen him exhibit a self-concentration and self-consciousness which were so constant and extreme as to be unfavorable to psychical health and equilibrium. We have found him intensely emotional and often mor-

bidly so; easily and wildly excitable; impatient under opposition, contradiction or disbelief; and subject to rapid and extreme mental changes and to sudden and extreme fits of exaltation and depression. And we may add others which are both inferable from his nature and exemplified in his conduct. He was, evidently, morbidly sensitive, suffered keenly, and intensely dreaded both suffering and death; although capable of obstinately facing the inevitable. He was morally and mentally brave, but physically timid: often venturing to the point of courting danger, and then fleeing with sudden agility when it menaced him, and remaining in hiding until it had passed. Like all moral and social theorists, his conceptions were more beautiful than practical, more ideal than real; and were better preached than practiced, even by himself. His affections were, at times, gushing; but they were confined to his own class and to believers in himself. He preached that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, and yet his *conception* of a neighbor was exemplified by the "Good Samaritan," whom none could help loving. He was in favor of dividing everything with the poor, and yet by this general distribution he was always the receiver and never the giver;—since he neither possessed anything, nor worked that he might earn it. He offered his own peculiar gift freely, but its bestowal was his only means, hope and dependence for winning a throne; and it was easy to *say*—"thy sins are forgiven thee." He tells us to love our enemies, and yet no man ever showered more continued and bitter curses upon his own. He instructs others to forgive their offending brother seventy-seven times, and yet, through all the years that we know him, he implacably

repudiated his own mother, brothers and sisters, simply because they could not believe in his wild notions and pretensions. He tells us to pray for those who despitefully use us, and yet he constantly insulted and abused those who even questioned or disputed his own divine claims, and expressly declared that he himself *did not pray for any one save his own disciples*—(John xvii. 9). He tells us, when we are smitten on one cheek to offer the other cheek to be smitten also, and yet we never find him waiting to be smitten even on the one cheek if fleet running could save him ; nor, when he was actually smitten, do we find him inviting a repetition of the operation on the other cheek, or failing to rebuke his smiter. He denounces all self-exaltation, and was indignant at the Pharisees for their pretentiousness and their ostentatious piety and charity, and yet no man has ever put forward more appalling pretensions, or more immeasurably exalted and lauded himself than Jesus. He exhorted us to despise the things of “ this world ” and “ of the flesh,” and yet he confesses that he had won the reputation of a glutton and a wine-bibber, and declined to require the usual fasts to be kept while he, the bridegroom, was present ; and, if ever he refused to eat or drink the best that could be had, whether with gentlemen, publicans or sinners, we have no record of it. He said “ render to Cæsar the things that belong to Cæsar ; ” and yet, he contested the right of Cæsar when tribute was demanded of himself, and only consented to pay it to avoid the consequences. He said—“ Blessed are the peace-makers,” and yet he declared that he himself had come, not to bring peace, but a sword, and to excite even family feuds and contentions. He ordered Peter to

put up his sword in Gethsemane, and sententiously declared, that those who drew the sword should perish by the sword,—when Peter had struck, like a man, in the common defence : and yet, that very sword had been brought there for the very purpose of defending him against that very arrest, by the express orders of Jesus himself, given only a few hours before, when he had commanded his disciples to arm themselves, and, if they had no arms, to go and sell their very garments and buy them. He commands us to visit widows, orphans and those in prison : but When in all his life did he visit or minister to either ? We might, indeed, show many instances of such inconsistencies in his teachings and such conflicts between his precepts and practices, were such elaboration deemed necessary. And certainly we may say, that he neither propounded a new idea of this life, of God, or of a future life. He left mankind as ignorant as he found them.

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Such would seem to be some of the more characteristic traits of Jesus, and such as will more especially concern us in our examination of the closing scenes of his career, which we now approach. Our past investigations, doubtlessly, will enable us to enter upon the examination of those scenes with at least an assured conviction that they must be interpreted as the results of the ideas and conduct of a *mere man*. If we cannot, then that investigation will serve to still further enlighten us upon that point.

Before parting with the subject under consideration, we beg to offer a precautionary suggestion. The assertion that Jesus and his disciples used unjustifiable means to secure their ends, will receive less credit than it is entitled to, from those who still shrink from imputing such conduct to persons who have been deemed so infallible and sacred ; while the proof of the assertion is calculated to unduly prejudice them in the mind of the skeptic. Both of these errors may be avoided by judging these men according to the moral standard and beliefs of their age and class, as well as the habits and frailties common to such people, so situated. Jesus and his disciples were neither faultless nor infallible ; nor comparatively speaking, were they bad men. It would be as unjust to characterize them as impostors, as it is impossible to deny that, in their modes of effecting their ends, they were sometimes guilty of disingenuousness and imposition. Jesus was honestly misguided by his own peculiar nature and powers. He had an earnest and religious nature, and his aspirations and ultimate aims he supposed to be in accordance with the divine will ; while his moral precepts were, as a whole, exceptionally good. His disciples, also, had genuine faith in his extraordinary virtues, views and promises. Under such circumstances, then, What had we a right to expect of these men ? Should we look for conduct in conformity with our own ideal standards of right and wrong, or even of their own ideal standards ? or should we not rather look for conduct in conformity with the ordinary course of human action in like cases ? Judging them, then, by this practical, legitimate, and ordinary standard, What had we a right to expect ? Has not all,

human experience shown, that even good men, in our time and in all times, who are struggling to advance a cause which they deemed good, and especially a cause which they deemed divine, and still more especially when sustaining supernaturalism, will resort, and have resorted, to disingenuous means to effect their ends? Is there a priest or preacher on earth wholly free from such a charge, even *now*?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEN WHO PROSECUTED, TRIED AND EXECUTED
JESUS.

WE cannot understandingly review the closing scenes of the career of Jesus without having freshly before our minds the character, situation and relations of the men who controlled the course of those events.

Of course, the central figure in this matter was the Roman Procurator. No character in history, save that of Judas Iscariot, has been so damned as that of Pontius Pilate ; and, without doubt, none has been so causelessly maligned by the Christian World. That his name should have been thus consigned to infamy by the worshippers of Jesus is a signal instance of the triumph of blind Fanaticism over Reason. In the conduct for which he stands thus accursed, he was not only without a stain of cruelty or injustice, but was entitled to the lasting gratitude of the lovers of Jesus. The Christian record itself leaves no possible doubt either as to his public conduct and motives, nor as to his earnest, sagacious and exhaustive efforts to outwit the Jews and save Jesus.

The character of Pilate, as we gather it from the

Gospels and Josephus, would seem to have been that of a man who was obstinately persistent and fairly just ; but secret, politic, cunning and superstitious. His position as Governor of the Jews had been a thorny one ; and he had learned to hate as well as fear the men he ruled, and to know that his hate was returned, with usury, by the conquered, but dissatisfied and inappeasable Jews. He had had the, perhaps inevitable, misfortune to fall into a deadly feud with that very Official Judea or Temple Party, who were the prosecutors of Jesus, and who were finally and fatally his own prosecutors. We say fatally, for they finally hounded Pilate to banishment, as they did Jesus to the cross. The hate was mutual and of long standing, and each party understood that they had nothing to expect from the other. The trial of Jesus was but one more encounter of strength and cunning — another “round” in the “mill” — between these powerful competitors. Pilate knew that to save Jesus was to run a stiletto into the heart of their common enemy. He could “stoop to conquer,” and he did not fail to treat the accusers of Jesus with politeness and consideration. But his *animus* and purpose was unmistakably manifested. So long as he hoped to avoid a condemnation of Jesus, he used every possible means of conciliation ; but when he was outwitted, or rather when he was forced into a dilemma by the obstinate and morbid perversity of Jesus, he gave unmistakable evidence of the gall that was rankling in his heart, and succeeded in insulting the Jews in the very act to which they had forced him.

The means by which the Jews coerced Pilate is

neither difficult of comprehension, nor left to inference. The magic words which finally cowed him into open and seeming acquiescence with the desire of his enemies point directly to Pilate's true and only cause of alarm. Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, was a most suspicious and dangerous tyrant. To incur his suspicion of lack of fidelity, was to incur the extremity of danger. This was well understood by both Pilate and his enemies, and right here lay the source of the Jewish power over Pilate in this transaction. Loyalty to Tiberius Cæsar might be alleged as an excuse for injury to the Jews, but to refuse the demand of the Jews for the punishment of a traitor to Cæsar, was to prove his own disloyalty—was to put a weapon in the hands of his enemies which he well knew would be fatal to himself. Whatever could be done to save Jesus, either by stratagem or power, without endangering himself, he was anxious to do, and did do. He knew that Jesus was impotent to injure the Roman power, and that he was really undeserving of death for his mere mockery of an attempt to become King of the Jews; and that any disturbance which he might create in favor of Jewish emancipation, would only give him, Pilate, the desired opportunity of punishing them, and of taking away the power they still possessed of opposing and annoying him. That his wife, Claudia Procula, was an earnest advocate for the acquittal of Jesus the record clearly shows. In the house of Herod, also, to whom he was sent for trial, he had not only a friend, but a devoted follower in Chusa, the wife of Herod's steward.

We know further that Jesus had a number of secret

aiders and abettors in the ranks of his enemies. Two of his friends are known to us by name,—Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea: both of them men of influence, both being members of the Sanhedrim, and one, and perhaps both, being wealthy. These secret coadjutors of Jesus soon found, that it was of no avail to offer a defence for Jesus before the Sanhedrim, since the evidence for his conviction was too plain for denial, and no other consideration could arrest either the enmity or policy which demanded his conviction; while the very first suggestion of a defence was met by a charge of complicity in his designs. But their prudence did not amount to pusillanimity. They stood by him to the last, secretly where they could, but openly where they must. They were discreet and secret, but still sagacious and powerful friends: belonging to that patriotic class, doubtlessly, who were anxious to encourage agitation for the liberty of their country, but who had too much to lose to venture upon an open advocacy of an immature movement.

Thus we find Jesus warmly and actively (even if secretly) represented both in the households of Pilate and Herod and also among the powerful members of the Jewish government. And, while our knowledge is but fragmentary, we cannot fail to perceive that, at every point of hope or danger, Jesus had friends, or at least aiders, to both warn, aid and, if possible, save him; and that Pilate and his wife were not only his active and earnest advocates, but that the trial and its whole management and the whole management of his crucifixion and the entire custody and control of his person were

in the hands of Pilate and of those over whom he had absolute control. Pilate, in fact, acted as executive officer, judge, and counsel for the prisoner. His power, like his inclination, had no limit save his dread of his own imperial and tyrant master. Nor are we to suppose that his commands or counsels fell on unwilling ears in this matter. For it is not to be presumed that the confidential subordinates and faithful soldiers of Pilate would fail to sympathize with their Chief in his controversies and purposes, or that they could witness the hatred of the Jews against themselves and their government, as well as their conscious air of superiority to the Gentiles, without feeling some of that hatred with which the Jews were so generally regarded in that day. We shall, therefore, find Jesus, from the time of his appearance before Pilate, hotly supported, as well as wholly in the hands of those who were anxious and determined to save him, and still more anxious and determined to thwart his enemies. The twelfth verse of the nineteenth chapter of John briefly, but sufficiently, shows the position of Pilate—"And from thenceforth Pilate *sought to release him*; but the Jews cried out saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not *Cæsar's friend*: whosoever *maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar*."

The Jewish Rulers were sagacious, cautious and determined, and thoroughly understood the situation. They knew that Pilate was aware of the kingly pretensions of Jesus, but also knew that he could but regard

them harmless as against the power of Rome. They knew, also, that, while impotent against the Roman power, Jesus might excite a sufficient riot, in his efforts before the rabble, to furnish Pilate an opportunity for suppressing it by arms, and of charging the Jews with rebellion ; and thereby secure a recall of whatever powers, privileges and religious autonomy had been reserved to them. The young and intractable Galilean agitator and aspirant was a standing menace, not to Rome, but to themselves. There was neither hope of redemption through him, nor of conciliating him. His hatred and denunciations were pointed directly at themselves, and all their attempts to approach him had only resulted in rendering Jesus more obstinate and insulting, and in making themselves more incensed at the blasphemy of his religious and moral pretensions and more hopelessly alarmed at his political ones. It was from this point of view that his arrest and destruction was determined upon. They reasoned that—"If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him ; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation"—(John xi. 48) ; and the High Priest declared that it was best to destroy him for the sake of the people—better one man die than ruin the nation.

Thus the lowly agitator, whom both parties would have otherwise despised, became, as it were, a prize or battle-ground over which Pilate and the Jewish rulers fought :—the one to save Jesus and sacrifice the Jews, and the other to sacrifice Jesus and save the Jews. The Jewish Rulers had the semi-autonomy of their country and "*our places*" at stake on the issue : Pilate had

his own position, pride and political personal safety involved : Jesus had his *all*. Such were the actors, conditions, motives and influences concerned in the trial and execution of Jesus.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ARREST.

THERE are scenes and incidents related in the Gospels in connection with the arrest of Jesus on that "night of sorrow" in Gethsemane, which bear so directly upon the great issue which we are to determine as to require of us careful investigation.

The Jewish officials had been attempting to have Jesus arrested for some time previous to his actual arrest, but Jesus had been agile and cunning enough to elude them. He had repeatedly fled when menaced with real danger of arrest. He knew that, during the great feasts, they feared to arrest him for fear of an "uproar among the people," and that they were seeking an opportunity to arrest him privately. To avoid this, Jesus had entered Judea secretly ; and, when at Jerusalem, he took the precaution of sleeping outside the city among his trusted followers, either at Bethany with his disciples there, or on Mount Olivet, in the groves and gardens ; and was thus enabled to continue to elude his enemies. His places of retreat were known only to his disciples, and these disciples were too numerous to be overcome by a few servants or civic officers of the

High Priest ; while to march the armed Temple guard, in *search* of them, would have been useless. All difficulty was finally overcome by the treachery of one of his own followers.

Nothing could more clearly show the secret but reliable connections which Jesus possessed in the Sanhedrim, than the early and correct information he received of the purposes of the Jewish rulers and of their tampering with Judas. Nor can anything be clearer than that Jesus contemplated a forcible, and, if need were, a bloody resistance to his arrest, if it were attempted without a Roman force. We find (Luke xxii. 35 et seq.) that his disciples had contemplated such a contingency, and had already procured a few weapons, but that, without knowing this, Jesus had excitedly ordered them to procure arms for defence, even if they had to sell their garments to buy them. And, upon being informed that they had two swords, he declared they would be sufficient ;—meaning, of course, as against the unarmed civic servants of the High Priest. And this is the reason we find Peter having and using a sword in Gethsemane.

We now approach that extraordinary scene of anguish and alarm in the garden, which would seem, of all his works and acts, most unlike man's, however little like a God's ; although even the most singular feature of his affections there, was not unparalleled in a number of recorded cases. As we have said, this young "King of the Jews" was as nervously apprehensive and timorous as he was mentally and morally brave. He had, during his stay at Jerusalem, been constantly excited and con-

tinually on the alert during the day, and had passed his nights in hiding and in security. His trepidation had been clearly manifested, upon hearing of his intended betrayal, by his excited manner, and his commands to his disciples to prepare for fighting. His command to them to take both money and arms with them, spoke both of flight and defence; and the whole scene told of sudden, confused and wild alarm. After he had reached the favored-hiding place, and night and darkness was around him, he begged his disciples to keep watch with him for the approach of danger, and piteously upbraided them for not keeping awake for merely that one night. While his disciples could not force themselves to keep awake during those midnight hours, it was impossible for Jesus either to sleep or rest. He could only pray—pray again and again, with wild and passionate fervor. What to do, he knew not. Escape might even then be impossible, and its attempt might but land him in the arms of his enemies; while, at best, another flight could but close his career, not only in failure, but in ridicule and contempt. To remain, with the traitor Judas on his track, was so imminently perilous as to make him tremble at every sound and rustle that was borne in through the darkness. Between such dire alternatives his unstrung mind was incapable of decision; his excited nerves were beyond control. He was in a tempest of agonizing doubt, uncertainty and fear, which were overwhelming and almost suffocating. Death and Degradation stared at him from out the darkness. His very soul and his whole nature was convulsed with an agony of fright. He prayed again and again that the bitter “cup” might pass from his lips—the cup which he had

so dreaded,—the death which he had so often fled from. The muffled tread of the armed soldiers was probably borne fitfully in upon his exalted senses, through the stillness of the night, while he yet prayed ; and his convulsed nature recorded his agony of doubt and dread in great sweat-like drops of blood upon his livid face. This was indeed a marvellous and appalling scene—a scene supremely mortal and profoundly pitiful. There have been occasional instances of this “bloody sweat” in like cases of overwhelming fright and terror, but they have been extremely rare. Such agonizing and demoralizing fear, however humiliating, is a result of organization or of organic derangement, and is a subject for pity only.

By a reaction almost as peculiar to Jesus as this sudden terror or “blood-sweat,” we find him, within a few minutes of his extremest fright and agony, and while the soldiers were known to be at hand and the dreaded arrest had become a certainty, speaking and acting with the coolness and considerateness of a philosopher and the sudden confidence of renewed hope. There was a marvellous and almost instant revulsion from fright and despair to confidence and hope. By whom, and by what means, was that change effected, and the mortal terror of that “cup” dissipated ?

With the general course of events upon that memorable night we wish to concern ourselves only so far as they are explanatory of certain facts which bear upon our main issue. There are four facts mentioned in the history of that night, which have special significance in connection with our interpretation or theory of facts concerning the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus :— facts which find in that theory natural and rational causes and explanations, but which can find them in no other. As these facts stand recorded in the Gospels and in our Christian beliefs, they are alien, unappropriated, mysterious and adverse facts ; while, upon our theory or hypothesis, they are susceptible of a rational and natural connection with each other, as well as with all the other facts, and directly suggest, and point to, such connections and to their consistency with the characters, motives and conditions concerned. They are not only consistent with our conception of the facts, but highly and especially explanatory of facts which are otherwise unexplainable.

The incidents or facts which we refer to, are,—first : the demoralization and terror of Jesus. Second : the appearance of the supposed angel. Third : the sudden change and “comfort” this angel’s message to Jesus effected. Fourth : the seizure of some unknown youth, by one of the guard, who was following Jesus as they were departing from Gethsemane and before they had entered the wall of the city, and who, without speaking a word, tore away from them, leaving his only rag of covering in their hands, and fled away, “naked,” into the darkness. We will suspend the con-

sideration of these facts for the purpose of making a few suggestions as to the value of such evidence and as to the proper mode of determining the true nature of the transactions we are to examine, and also for the purpose of briefly stating our own conception or theory of the matter; in order that the Reader may more correctly estimate the value of the evidence to be referred to and relied upon, and to perceive its relation to our special theory as to the facts, as we introduce them.

The course of human thoughts and actions, like the movements of unconscious nature, necessarily have some coherence, consistency and order of consecution, however hidden and incomprehensible the links or connections in the chain of causation may be. Men's course of conduct may be inconsistent with *our* notions and motives, in many ways, but they never can be inconsistent with those of the actors. Even the acts of a lunatic are consistent with lunacy. Whatsoever has happened must have happened in the way it did, since the very fact of its so happening is proof that all the conditions, causes and influences which would necessarily have produced the actual results, were brought to bear upon them in the mode requisite to produce them. Our investigations of the hidden or obscure acts of others are wholly dependent upon this correlation between causes and effects, motives and actions—upon the coherences, consistencies and congruities in Nature. Knowing motives, we infer, or interpret, conduct.

Knowing conduct, we infer or interpret motives and language. The process of investigating human conduct and motives is one of inference and construction. In the absence of a knowledge of the actual facts we infer them from the known character and general situation and purposes of the actors, and the conditions, inducements and influences under which they acted. In the absence of a knowledge of the individual and his purposes, we are compelled to interpret his motives by his conduct and by the standard common to humanity, when acting under such circumstances. When we know the character, motives and purposes of the actors, we must expect them to act in pursuance of them, and must construe their actions and language by, and in conformity with them. We can neither investigate nature, nor human actions, without some *theory* of them. When we would reproduce or reconstruct and explain some past human transaction from partial, obscure or fragmentary facts, we are compelled to provisionally assume some theory or hypothesis as to the true character of it—(the one deemed most plausible,) and then test its conformity with the known facts and its capacity for rationally appropriating and explaining them; and thus continue to try and test various hypotheses or supposititious states of fact until one is found that *completely fits and explains* the entire evidence or known facts.

Manifestly, the value of the several known facts in pointing out the unknown ones will be exactly commensurate with their *singularity*. A large portion of the facts, in most cases, can be made to exhibit a real or apparent conformity with almost any plausible theory.

They are not sufficiently characteristic and exclusive to be significant. There are other classes of facts which have a far greater indicative capacity, on account of their rarity or peculiarity. Where these are found in the evidence, they constitute a kind of crucial test, as it were; and any theory which can appropriate and explain them in connection and consistency with all the other facts, is entitled to belief; while those that fail to do so are fatally defective. Facts are often disclosed by the evidence which are not only rare or singular, but are even wholly exceptional; and such facts constitute, of themselves, a test of the whole hypothesis. It is, often, just such seemingly insignificant, and, as it were, idiosyncratic waifs which stray loose among the facts, or cling to odd angles of the evidence, that are the readiest and surest guides to the true theory of the facts and the surest tests and proofs of its correctness when it is found. Human mysteries, like human bodies, are most readily identified or exposed by their warts, moles and deformities. A true hypothesis will explain and appropriate all such facts, readily and naturally; while it is the *only* one which will,—especially where there are several of such crucial facts. The magnitude of such facts does not determine their importance: it is their singularity. The facts which we have already referred to, as well as others which will accumulate as we advance, possess more or less of this character of singularity and exclusiveness, and point with wonderful directness to our solution or rendering of the conduct and fate of Jesus.

The theory by which we purpose to explain the facts and solve the mystery of the closing scenes in the recorded career of Jesus, is simply this,—namely : that Jesus did not die on the cross ; but that, when supposed to be dead, simply because he was crucified and pronounced dead, he was in fact living ; although in a condition resembling death. And it will be contended, that his entire treatment and punishment *tended* and was *calculated* to produce that result and not death ; and that those who had control of him and his punishment, not only contemplated, but connived at and aided the result indicated : this latter fact, however, being unnecessary to the truth of our theory.

If the entire facts, from beginning to end, can be shown to be in conformity with this view, we shall have reduced the whole transaction to a basis which is at once rational and comprehensible, and shall have solved the one mystery which has been the very mother of mysteries. And we undertake to say, that the entire real facts can, not only be fully accounted for upon this supposition, but can be so accounted for upon no other theory with even a show of reason and consistency. Nay, more, I affirm with confidence that few conclusions can be rendered more conclusive either from fact or reason ; and that, if the Gospel accounts of the reappearance of Jesus after his crucifixion is to be credited, the conclusion is *absolutely resistless*. Let no reader fail to give the matter a fair and candid examination on account of its novelty or of its conflict with all their preconceived notions, but rather give it the more earnest and hopeful investigation ; seeing that whatever theory

can solve the supposed mystery, *must* be novel ;—all old ones having ended only in irrationalities and inanities. Only consent to give the facts and reasons the same weight which you would were they applicable to any other mortal that ever lived, instead of Jesus, and the difficulties and mysteries alike vanish.

From this episode, Let us return to the four facts on the night of the arrest, already noted. And first, to that of the agonizing fright and blood-sweating of Jesus. These phenomena, together with the wild desire and passionate prayer of the victim of them for his escape from the suffering and death which menaced him, would seem wholly conclusive of the fallacy of the pretensions to Divinity and *voluntary self-sacrifice* now claimed for this frightened and suppliant sufferer; and, if so, are equally conclusive of the mistake as to his resurrection. The resurrection has been considered the essential and conclusive proof of his divinity, and had he not been supposed to have resurrected by his own divine power, no thought of his resurrection from real death would have been entertained. It was deemed at once a result and a proof of his divine nature and power. Both Christianity and Jesus stand irrevocably committed to the fact that Jesus *voluntarily* suffered and voluntarily “*rose* from the dead.” Jesus is represented as using language which puts the matter beyond question. In the Gospel of John (x. 17, 18) he says—“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I *lay* down my life that I

might *take* it again. No man taketh it from me, but I *lay it down myself*. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." No declaration could be more complete or more explicit. It forbids either construction or evasion. And yet, How stands the case when we look upon that ghastly scene of terror and supplication in Gethsemane? Was this terror-stricken and hiding man, who was sweating very blood at the thought of his being lawfully arrested for his conduct and at the anticipation of the death that menaced him, and was praying his followers to help him watch and avoid the danger, and praying God that this fearful "cup" which was being pressed to his lips, might pass from him—Was this man, we say, a God? Was he even a *man willingly* offering up his life—that life which he had so often fled to save, and which he now hid, and watched and prayed to save, and sweat blood at the bare thought of losing? Were these either proofs of his Godhood, of his Kinghood, or of his Manhood? Were they even evidence of his descent from that lion-hearted lad who confronted Goliath with his shepherd-sling? These facts were too naked and palpable to permit of rational evasion. They are only avoidable by that blind superstition which will accept any pretence,—however absurd, and any quibbling,—however gross, in *defence* of *Jesus*; and that is utterly impervious to both fact and reason when his pretensions are *questioned*. The mental and physical condition of Jesus on that night will also furnish the most, if not the only, rational explanation of the blood and water which is said to have flowed from his side on the next day; if, indeed, that allegation be not purely mythic, as we believe it to be.

We have next to consider the fact that some person who was robed in white (since he was seen by the disciples at the distance of a "stone's throw," at night, and was supposed by them to be an angel ; which, of necessity, must have been in white) came to Jesus just immediately before the arrival of the Roman guard and when Jesus was in the very height of his agonizing doubt and terror. What communication this person made to Jesus we are not informed, but we are told that the purpose of the visit was to "comfort" him : and we find that his conduct confirms this statement, and gave striking proof of the success of this mission of comforting. For we find him immediately returning to his disciples, and informing them, in the most self-possessed manner, that the watch which he had so anxiously besought them to keep was no longer needful, and that Judas and his backers were already at hand.

If we assume the unknown persons in a human drama to be supernatural beings in human form, and account for all uncomprehended facts and actions by supernatural agencies, and thus place ourselves outside of reason and natural law, we may irrationally account for any possible state of things upon any and every possible hypothesis, and can *call* it an explanation ; but, by no rational method can we account for this midnight visit of comfort or its marvellous success, or for the real need of such comfort by Jesus, from the orthodox standpoint. Nor can any mortal conceive why an angel should have to be sent with a message of any kind to an Incarnate God, or what any angel could tell him about his own affairs—about affairs which he himself had pre-

determined "before the World was," and was now going through with according to his predetermination. Nor can any grounds of comfort or the need of them, in *such* a case, enter into the understanding of man ; since he was not only going through with *exactly* what he desired and had determined to go through, and *must* go through, upon the orthodox view of the matter, but he was certainly informed that the very arrest which he dreaded, and from which he was hiding, was certainly and immediately to take place, and he was actually tried, condemned and crucified. Not a single pang, therefore, which he had dreaded, *could* be avoided or was *in fact* avoided, but all took place as he had pre-known and desired it should. What then was, or could have been, the message of comfort conveyed by that angel, which so suddenly calmed and re-inspired the despairing and frightened Jesus? Is not the whole scene an inexplicable mystery and absurd contradiction, upon the Christian theory? It will not answer to say that all this applied to the mere *man* Jesus. For the Gospels neither intimate, nor countenance such a distinction ; nor is such a distinction consistent with the assumed nature and mission of Jesus. The two natures, if there were two, were inseparably united, and the *efficient suffering and sacrifice* which was to atone for man's sins, was not the death of the young carpenter of Galilee in his human capacity, but the suffering and death of the incarnate Son of God who voluntarily gave himself to suffer and die as an atonement for the sins of humanity. It was *divine* suffering that paid the penalty. Nor is it intimated in the scriptures that the Jesus who suffered in the garden was then any different, or any differently

related to God or the Divine Son, from what he was at all times.

Who, then, was this midnight white-robed visitor and comforter? and What was the nature of his message? The message must have concerned the subject about which Jesus himself was so concerned and alarmed, and must have been of a nature to relieve his fears and re-inspire him with hope on that subject, since this was the antidote or comfort he required to allay his peculiar sufferings; and the result proved the fact of an actual application of an antidote to his excessive *fear*. From whence, then, could come such a message of encouragement and hope in regard to his dreaded trial? Is it not manifest that this was a messenger sent by his confidential friends, or secret coadjutors behind the scenes, who had already notified him of the secret tampering with Judas? With such active friends as we know him to have possessed in the very council of his enemies, it is hardly credible that they would have failed to have consulted with him and arranged to notify him of the movements against him. And it is not improbable that the fear of their abandoning him in the hour of his danger and trial had added to his apprehension and alarm. The occurrence, then, was not only a reasonable and natural one, but a presumable one. The Roman authorities could not have been ignorant of the public pretensions and movements of Jesus and of the troubles of the Jews concerning him, nor is it probable that the leading secret coadjutors of Jesus would fail to ascertain the views of Pilate in regard to him, as soon as the betrayal of Jesus rendered his arrest probable. When the pro-

gramme of the arrest, therefore, was agreed upon in the council that night, it is presumable, and in the natural course of events, that his secret and powerful coadjutors in the Sanhedrim, who were apprised of the decision and arrangements, would at once despatch a messenger to inform Jesus both of the coming of the Roman guard and of their own continued fidelity to him, as well as of the determination to bring him before Pilate for trial, and of Pilate's inclination to defend and acquit him : so that Jesus might not be driven to despair, if escape were impossible. These assurances were sent, doubtlessly, by a son or confidential servant of the sender ; and, were he discovered, it would expose the complicity of this secret coadjutor with the movements of Jesus and bring him into discredit, trouble and danger. The course to be finally pursued was probably not agreed upon by the Jewish rulers until after midnight, and the movements were probably so unexpectedly prompt, that the messenger, when suddenly aroused from sleep and dispatched with his message, was instructed to fly with speed and without preparation, or he would be followed almost immediately by the guard of arrest. All this, and still more that we shall yet notice, is highly probable under the circumstances and the relations of the parties, and at once explains the visit of the white-robed angel, as well as the general nature of his message and the reason that it so suddenly allayed the extreme terror of Jesus and re-inspired him with hope. It was a human comforter bearing tidings of human help and hope.

The remaining fact referred to, is still more singular and significant. So strange did it seem, that it continued to be remembered for a quarter of a century or more, and forced its way into the Gospels; although no attempt is made to explain it or to connect it with the proceedings of the night, in any way. It appears that, after the messenger had delivered his message to Jesus and doubtlessly informed him of the immediate approach of the guard, Jesus immediately went and informed his disciples of the approach of the guard, and was then immediately arrested; and, in a few moments, was on his way to the city, in their custody. After all his disciples had fled or left him, and when Jesus and his guard had left the garden and were on their way to the city, we are told by Mark, that "*there followed him (Jesus) a certain young man, having a linen cloth about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.*" As it stands, this singular fact would seem to have no significance, and, upon the orthodox theory, *can* have none. And yet, it was so singular and so evidently connected with Jesus and his arrest, that it has floated down to us side by side with the crucifixion and the bloody sweat. Were not the disciples right? Was it not a fact to be noted, even if inexplicable, that this lone young man—a stranger to the followers of Jesus—should be found following Jesus just after he had left his secret retreat, between midnight and day, with no clothing but a "linen cloth?" Was it not still more singular and significant that, when he was discovered and seized, he never protested, never explained, nor opened his lips, but tore away from them, leaving his sole covering in their hands, and fled voice-

less and stark-naked into the night—a night, too, which was so *cold* that they had to have a *fire inside* the house of the High Priest even for the servants? How came this young man, whom none of the disciples knew, to be thus following Jesus from his secret hiding place to the city, when his own followers had left him? How came he to be following Jesus from that garden, unless he had been with him in the garden, visiting him about that very arrest? Why such terror at the prospect of being discovered and identified by those men of the Temple Party? Why in such a hasty covering on so cold a night? Must there not have been both a powerful motive and a sudden emergency to have brought him there at such a time, in such weather, and in such a garb,—a powerful motive also to tempt him to abandon even that single covering in such weather and at such a time and place?

The motive of his being there can scarcely be conceived to be other than to serve Jesus in some form, and even in some form connected with that night's proceedings. He was not a disciple of Jesus, nor known to his followers. He did not belong to the party of arrest. The place, time, his following Jesus and his fear of discovery, all manifestly tend to show, that he was there on account of Jesus. His motive for so dreading exposure is quite clear, upon our supposition as to him and his purpose. He knew that, if he was detained, he would be known by the men who seized him, and that his recognition would expose his purpose, and subject those who sent him to the charge of treachery to the Sanhedrim and of complicity with Jesus in his treasonable schemes. Hence he risked all, rather than be discovered. The

whole facts clearly show that this young man was returning from the hiding place of Jesus to the city, and that he had been connected with the night's work, in some secret and dangerous way, in favor of Jesus. And yet the object and motive of that connection was unknown to the disciples, and is wholly inconceivable to us upon the orthodox theory. It is a fact for which that theory finds no place or explanation. On the other hand our theory anticipates such a movement and hails it as one of its proofs. Before we have reached this mysterious occurrence other mysterious facts had prepared us for an explanation of this one ; and this, in its turn, throws back its explanatory light upon the former one. They are parts of the same transaction. It becomes manifest that the same "angel" who brought the comforting message to Jesus in the garden, had secretly witnessed his arrest and cautiously followed him and the guard as they passed out of the garden and proceeded to the city, whither he himself also proposed to return, still wrapped in his ghostly sheet or linen cloth. But when they had gotten out of the darker garden into the more open ground, he was discovered and, being under such suspicious circumstances, was suspicioned and seized. Rather than be identified he left his only covering in their hands and fled, naked. Had he been a stranger to the parties who arrested him, or had he been innocent of any connection with their movements or designs, and had been following them from idle curiosity or accident, he could have had no cause for fearing those men or for fearing to be recognized by them ; and he certainly would not have abandoned his covering and exposed himself, on such a night and in such a place, in the

manner he did, rather than speak a word of explanation. That he should have been in such a peculiar undress, even, is readily explicable upon our supposition ; while it would be difficult to suggest any pretence of a reason for it on any other. The uncertainty as to the course and the time of action of the enemies of Jesus, the lateness of the hour at night when immediate action was actually determined upon, the promptness of the action, etc., rendered it necessary to arouse a messenger from sleep to send to Jesus, and in such haste as to allow him only time to throw his *sâdin* or linen cloth, under which he slept, around him. For the people of Palestine, neither then, nor, I believe, now, clothed themselves on going to bed in night clothing, as we do ; but completely undressed, and then threw their *sâdin*—a kind of “ wrapper of fine linen ”—around them. That a person aroused from sleep to be sent on an instant message of life and death, should have thrown this linen wrapper around him and departed without other clothing, is very natural and probable, or, at least, quite comprehensible and credible. It is also probable, that the messenger was compelled to rely upon the opening of the city gates for the guard, for his own opportunity of getting out of, and returning to, the city at that late hour of the night ; and if so, we will have, in that fact, an additional explanation of the hurry of the messenger and also of his following the guard so closely on its return.

Thus we see that, by eliminating the *supernatural* element from these mysterious transactions, they all point to a probable solution or state of facts which, when assumed, corresponds with the whole facts and

situation, as well as with the characters, objects and relations of the parties concerned; and connects them in a single transaction, which was at once rational and almost predictable, and which conforms to, and explains the general situation and transactions of the night, and leaves no fact unappropriated or shrouded in mystery. Can the Christian theory do this? or any other theory? Or, Could Christians agree upon *any one* theory of the facts, among themselves?

We must be pardoned for the pains we have taken to insure a correct conception of the facts of this momentous night. They are the prologue to the more momentous drama of the following day, and tend to point out the *rôles* and *cues* (almost) of the actors in that drama, and the secret scenes which followed it. In entering upon the trial of Jesus we shall be prepared, if our solution is the right one, to expect other evidences of the relations, purposes and intentions which these singular facts have suggested and evidenced, and must take care to note their occurrence, progress and results.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRIAL.

THE first examination of Jesus occurred before the Jewish authorities very early on the morning after his arrest. Upon his own confession the Sanhedrim "condemned him to be guilty of death" for the crime of blasphemy. But the ecclesiastical tribunal had no power to order an execution of the death-penalty, nor could they try him upon the principal charge of sedition or treason. For these purposes it was necessary to send him to the Roman or civic power. This they accordingly did, and went before Pilate, in a body, to make their accusation against Jesus and demand his conviction and execution. So rude were the methods of government then existing, that there were neither sworn witnesses, nor written accusation, nor any record of proceedings and judgment even in this capital case, but the prisoner was arraigned, tried and convicted after the manner of an American mob or Vigilance Committee :—Pilate acting in all the parts of judge, counsel, governor, military commander and high sheriff.

Before Pilate we find a judicial trial, in many respects, without a parallel. We find the Jews hounding on the Roman procurator to destroy one of their own people for attempting to overthrow the Roman power in Judea, and set up a Jewish one; while we find the Roman procurator exercising his utmost sagacity and cunning to save this avowed and openly proclaimed "King of the Jews" from the penalties of treason against his own government. The secret of this anomalous state of affairs we have already considered. Besides these considerations, however, it is clear, that both Pilate and Herod considered Jesus too insignificant to be looked upon in the light of a political competitor, or to be regarded as in any way dangerous to their power. Herod, evidently, was aware that he was regarded as "possessed" or insane, and supposed him to be a magician; and was desirous, indeed, of witnessing some of his performances. Pilate would seem to have regarded him as a singular, but by no means dangerous or bad man: and became even superstitiously excited in his behalf when he heard of his wife's dreams about him, and of his claim to be a Son of God.

The "judgment seat" of Pilate was on the pavement outside the body or walls of his palace. The Jewish accusers of Jesus neither went, nor had the strict right to go, within the palace itself; and we are expressly told, that they did not enter it upon this occasion, lest their entrance into this Gentile palace

might so defile them as to unfit them for partaking of the approaching feast of the Passover. The examinations of Jesus and the consultations with him were within the palace and beyond the observation and hearing of all save its Roman inmates and such as Pilate chose to admit or invite. Whatever personal punishments or indignities Jesus may have received, also occurred in the palace. Whatsoever was known or reported outside of the palace with regard to what occurred within it, was reported as Pilate desired it, and in the way he desired it. The accusation, confession, pleading, controversies and judgment were public, but the entire intercourse of Pilate with Jesus and the pretended scourging and indignities which are alleged to have occurred, were in private. Of these private scenes we have, in the main, what Pilate was desirous or willing to be known, and in the form in which he desired them to be believed.

It would appear, by John's account, that, when the prisoner was brought for the purpose of trial and condemnation, Pilate came *out* unto them, and said: "What accusation bring you against this man?" and that the Jews, thinking their own examination ought to have been sufficient, replied that, if he had not been a malefactor, they would not have brought him before Pilate. The Procurator then told them to take him and try and punish him according to their own laws, but they declined, as Pilate expected they would, on account of their want of power to "put any man to death." Then "Pilate *entered into* the judgment *hall* again and called *Jesus* unto him." That is, he came out and heard the

Jews, and then returned into his palace and sent for Jesus. Thus we find him alternately coming out and talking with the accusers, and again returning into the palace to talk with Jesus and those inside, throughout the whole proceeding.

The Jews laid many things to his charge, among others, that he was a blasphemer ; that he perverted the nation ; refused to pay tribute to Cæsar ; and proclaimed himself "Christ a King"—that is, the "anointed King" of the Jews. To every charge made against him Jesus remained obstinately silent to his accusers. Pilate was evidently taken by surprise at the extent of the charges, and asked Jesus, in public, as to what answer he had to make to the charge of proclaiming himself King. Jesus simply *confessed* the charge and remained silent. Pilate, who saw danger brewing, took him apart and examined him privately on this matter. Jesus, without retracting his confession, is said to have made some explanation of his mysterious notions about the nature of his kingdom, which Pilate accepted as satisfactory. But the difficulty did not lay with Pilate, who was already pre-determined to save him, and disappoint their common enemies, but it lay in satisfying the Jews, who were determined to convict him as a matter of expediency and safety. And, before these latter, Jesus refused to make either reply or explanation. If he ever made any explanation before Pilate, he cer-

tainly refused to let the public know it. He boldly claimed to be "King of the Jews," and refused to make either retraction, explanation or concession to conciliate his accusers or to relieve Pilate from the terrible dilemma in which he had placed him by his own confession of guilt upon the political charge. He seems to have fallen into one of his moody fits, and would yield nothing before his Jewish enemies, but relied solely upon his powerful friends and the Romans for his safety. He was, perhaps, so ignorant of the character of Tiberius Cæsar as to be unaware of the fatal dilemma into which he was driving his advocate and judge. He may not have clearly seen, that to ignore such a palpable and confessed breach of law and indignity to the sovereignty of the Roman Emperor, in the face of such powerful Jewish opposition, was more than even Pilate dared do.

In spite of this conduct of Jesus, however, Pilate returned to the Jews with the verdict—"I find no fault in this man." Upon this the Jews grew furious and importunate. But, in reiterating and specializing their charges, it leaked out that Jesus was a Galilean. The adroit advocate and wily judge at once seized and acted upon the hint this fact suggested. If Jesus was a Galilean he was a subject of Herod, and Herod happened to be then in Jerusalem, and had nothing to fear from the people of Judea. Pilate could, therefore, send this Galilean to be tried before the Ruler of Galilee.

In pursuance of this new hope, the cause, the prisoner, and his accusers were sent to Herod for his examination and decision. This apparently friendly

compliment and deference to Herod, with such messages as Pilate would naturally send to him, doubtlessly stimulated the favorable inclinations of Herod. At all events Herod declined to sentence Jesus, although he had remained even more obstinately silent before him than he had, publicly, before Pilate.

When Jesus was returned to Pilate by Herod, Pilate again called the Jewish Rulers, and announced this second acquittal of the prisoner : and again proposed his final discharge. And, to make the matter more palatable to his excited accusers, he proposed to first chastise and humiliate him, and then discharge him. But this offer failed to placate the Jews. They did not care to have him suffer, merely, but desired to get *rid* of him.

But Pilate's resources had not failed, nor did his courage or efforts slacken. Remembering that it was customary, at the feast of the Passover, to grant a pardon to some Jewish convict or prisoner, on the petition of the people, Pilate proposed that, in obedience to this custom he would release unto them Jesus, and thus justify their accusation of him and compel him to owe his life and freedom to their clemency. This overture, also, was rejected, amid the wildest excitement.

In the very teeth of a riot Pilate still presented a determined front, and exhibited a spirit even more unyielding and subtle, if less excitable, than that of the

Jews. His zeal was stimulated, also, more than once, during the course of the trial. His wife's appeal to him was calculated to arouse both his sympathies and his superstition. Even on the judgment seat her message reached him—"have nothing to do with the blood of that just man : for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Then again it transpired that Jesus claimed to be a son of God, setting Pilate in a real tremor of dread as to the possibilities, and sending him promptly into the palace for another private conference, and to concoct new schemes. It was not until Pilate had made some dozen different efforts to publicly save Jesus, that he was finally driven to the necessity of publicly acknowledging his public defeat.

The final effort of Pilate to produce a reaction in favor of Jesus was worthy of his versatile and politic nature. He had not, and could not have had, any doubt as to the dangerous position in which he was placed from the moment the charge of treason against the Emperor was distinctly urged and openly confessed. The open and notorious pretensions and acts of Jesus, also, had, beyond question, rendered him liable to the penalties of treason. It was impossible to avoid either the prior evidences or his persistent present confession. Pilate cared nothing for the opinion of the Jews, but he knew in what light his acquittal of Jesus under such a charge, and with such proofs, could be represented to the Emperor. In this point of view he had struggled, in every conceivable mode, to placate and mollify the prosecutors. Unfortunately, the wily Jews understood his purposes and the hold they had upon him as well as he did ; and, when utterly tired out by Pilate's delays, manœuvres

and private consultation, in the palace, they made their knowledge and power unmistakably known and felt in their final play in the game. Their trump card came in this form: "If thou let this man go, *thou art no friend of Cæsar's*:"—an accusation which Pilate well knew would meet a ready and ruthless endorsement from his tyrant master. He might not finally succumb to this menace—he might evade it secretly, but he dared not defy it openly. And yet, he endeavored, with consummate cunning, to reverse his defeat in the very act of finally conceding it. Knowing the wonderfully impressive and emotional nature of the Jews, this consummate advocate and actor assumed the most thrilling tragic vein in the final scene. In the midst of the turbulent cries of the passionate multitude he ordered water to be brought out to his judgment seat, and there, in the presence of the whole multitude, he solemnly washed his hands, exclaiming—"I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man: see ye to it."

This last attempt to produce a revulsion of feeling in favor of Jesus having failed, nothing could now save him from the cross. Up to that point, at least, the Jews had won; and Pilate stood publicly bullied, defeated and humiliated. He had tried in vain to *publicly persuade*, or *elude* them. If he could yet succeed, he would be compelled to *secretly hood-wink and delude* them. Would he, and Could he, do it? This was the question.

We have now seen something of the character of Pilate, something of his relations with the Jewish prosecutors of Jesus, something of the feelings, motives and purposes with regard to Jesus and his cause: the question now arises—Will this man Pilate finally yield the life for which he has so earnestly and gallantly fought, to the demands of their common enemies, without a further struggle? Will his own public defeat and humiliation cow this politic and flexible, but obstinate advocate, or will it gall and inspire him? Would an advocate of such fertility of resource abandon his client on the first conviction without an effort to delay, avoid, or reverse the fatal result, if not by an appeal, still by some other method? Would such an advocate and judge, burning with indignation at the cruelty and injustice of the fate of his client and with the undeserved humiliation of a defeat which had been openly and nakedly *forced* upon him by the threats of his hated, but dreaded enemies, tamely yield while there still remained power and resources in his hands to right these wrongs, and while he had his own wife and the powerful friends of Jesus to urge him to the extremity of effort? If the life of Jesus *could still* be saved, surely every motive which could stimulate Pilate, whether as judge, advocate, executive, husband or man, urged him to continue his efforts to the last, to avoid, as far as possible, this cruel and *forced* sentence. That such efforts were made and were successful, is evidenced at almost every step of the subsequent proceedings, although in a manner to avoid exposure and responsibility. That the effort to evade so cruel a sentence and one forced upon the Judge in defiance of his own convictions by the personal intimi-

dations of the prosecutors and mob, was thoroughly justifiable and right, none will question.

Had Pilate, aided by his soldiers, agents and servants, as well as by the powerful Jewish friends of Jesus, the *power* and *opportunity* to save the life of this condemned man ; while submitting to a partial execution of the sentence ? Of this there is as little doubt as that he would attempt it. We have already seen, that the exclusive control of everything was in his hands. As he had only one check to his power on the trial, so he had but one check to his power in executing or avoiding the sentence,—namely : the necessity for guarding against furnishing the Jewish rulers with proofs of his own personal complicity in the escape of the prisoner. Could he but avoid this, his power, as well as his inclination, to save the prisoner was unlimited. We shall find that, at every stage of the proceedings, and during every moment of time from the condemnation of Jesus until his re-appearance from the tomb of Joseph after the crucifixion, he was in the hands and under the *exclusive management and control of his ardent supporters or friends*. We also know that, during the trial, as well as after it, the Roman authorities had ample opportunities for secret consultations and arrangements among themselves and with the Jewish friends of Jesus, and of bringing to bear their entire joint cunning and resources to save the prisoner ; and that, with their joint power and resources, they could command all the skill and means for the accomplishment of their purposes which the time and city afforded. Every medical aid was within their reach, and every officer and soldier did but reflect the secret will and desire of Pilate. It was these

friends or aiders of Jesus, who determined the place of execution, the character of the cross and of the implements to be used and of the time and manner of using them and the treatment of the prisoner and the final *fact of death*. They determined, also, what drinks should be administered while he was on the cross, and administered them in their own way and time. They formed the military cordon around the place of execution, and determined who should be permitted to come within it, and how near the public were to be allowed to approach. They decided when the punishment was complete, and when he should be taken from the cross, and whether his limbs should, or should not, be broken, as was the custom. They decided as to the custody of him after he was taken from the cross, and as to his disposal and treatment afterwards. To these facilities we shall find ourselves enabled to add a rare concurrence of circumstances favoring the chance and encouraging the purpose of saving the life of the prisoner. The fact of the trial and execution having occurred on the "preparation day" for the sabbath of the Passover, which "sabbath day was a high day," was a most fortunate coincidence. The Jews had been compelled, on this account, to remain entirely outside of the palace, and thus to give the amplest opportunity to the friends of the prisoner for unobstructed conferences and for pre-arrangements for concerted action. The requisite preparations for this great religious feast would, and did, compel the Jews to retire early from the place of execution, as they all had to be finished by sundown ;—that being the commencement of the sabbath day in question, after which nothing could be done. By law, also, the body of Jesus was com-

pelled to be taken from the cross and *disposed of before sunset* on the day of his execution. These concurring facts were fortunate in the extreme. So that we enter upon a consideration of the evidence with an assurance of the presence of the desire, the means, the power, and the purpose to save, and also with an assurance of the existence of the rarest opportunities and of the most propitious concurrence of favorable conditions opening the way for success and stimulating and encouraging endeavor. We not only have these powerful persuasives to believe and expect that the man *will* be saved, but we have the overwhelming fact that he was *actually alive* afterwards, and was secretly bivouacing and *eating fish* on the shores of his old Galilean sea, a month or more afterwards!

Although the facts of the crucifixion, as detailed to us in the Gospels, are perfectly compatible with the *natural* survival and recovery of Jesus,—nay, are almost absolutely incompatible with any other results, there are so many indications and evidences of a *design* and *effort* to save him, that it is deemed proper to treat the matter from that point of view. The facts, however caused, will be found utterly incompatible with any other hypothesis than that of *continued life* on the cross and afterwards. But, as acts are always best comprehended in connection with the real motives and purposes of the actors, and as the very fact that consistent and characteristic motives can be shown, to explain a long and varied series of

facts and transactions in accordance with a hypothesis based upon design and intention, is almost conclusive of the truth of such hypothesis, we shall do well to examine the facts with a theory of design; assured that, if we fail as to the conclusiveness of our evidences of design, we have still the theory of natural preservation and the omnipotent *fact* of preservation to fall back upon. We must not, of course, expect to find a purpose to save Jesus openly expressed or glaringly manifested through the scenes of the execution, as we have through the scenes of the trial; since we know that all such purposes were attempted to be concealed. But, while the purposes and influences which shaped and controlled the facts lay concealed beneath them, they were not so deeply buried as to fail to make an intelligible line of ripples on the surface of the current of facts, by which we are enabled to detect and judge them.

After the sentence had been irrevocably passed, under the coercion of the Jews, one of Pilate's centurions was entrusted with its execution, and, with a sufficient guard of soldiers, proceeded to Calvary with the prisoner. We have accounts of indignities having been offered to Jesus during the trial, which were of no moment; since, with the exception of scourging—(at least a report or pretence of which must have been gone through with as a necessary part of the punishment of crucifixion) the indignities consisted of mere mockeries of his royalty, and were really done, or reported to have been done, to appease and placate the Jews. If these things were actually done, they were done under Pilate's eye and direction, and we can estimate about how much

Jesus would be really injured by them, by Pilate's conduct before his conviction and by the wholly exceptional kindness with which he caused Jesus to be treated after his conviction. For whatever was not exceptionally kind and considerate occurred before he was finally ordered to execution, and we can comprehend the weight of Pilate's blows on this "just man" in whom he "found no fault," and for whose acquittal he had so ardently struggled. We find an exhibition of the real feeling of Pilate and of his subordinates towards Jesus, at the very outset of the execution. It was customary for the prisoners to bear their own crosses. But, no sooner had they left the hall of justice than the centurion, without deigning to assign or feign an excuse, seized upon the first sturdy fellow he found, and compelled him to carry the cross of Jesus to Calvary—(Matt. xxvii.—xxxii. Luke xxiii.—xxvi. Mark xv.—xxi). This was not only a partiality shown him, but a matter of policy to conserve his strength for the brief but exhausting ordeal through which, in any event, he had to pass. It may be suggested that Jesus was feeble, but no such suggestion can be maintained. No such explanation is hinted in the Gospels; and it comes with bad grace from those who claim that he is the final and supreme type of that sacrifice which was to be perfect of its kind—"without spot or blemish." Besides, from the whole tenor of his life and habits, we learn that he was a hearty and free liver—was active, agile and healthy, with a free, open-air life, and without a single hour's sickness during all of his recorded life. This is a matter which we must also carefully remember when we come to consider how much punishment he was capable of withstanding.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

ON the march out of the city and up the little knoll or hill of Calvary nothing of moment occurred save the refusal of Jesus to partake of the "wine and myrrh" which was tendered him by some friendly hand. This cup of wine mixed with myrrh was called the "mercy cup," and was usually offered by sympathizers or friends, to persons who were going on the cross, for the purpose of enabling them to bear their sufferings, by deadening their sensibilities to pain and stimulating them to bear them. Although it was a customary kindness to the crucified it was not offered in this instance by the Romans, and was promptly rejected by Jesus. His bearing during the march was collected and confident, and, together with his refusal of the "mercy cup," shows that he was not only not exhausted, but was determined to have his senses unimpaired while on the cross, even at the expense of greater pain. He had been so favored that, on arriving at the place of execution, he was evidently neither seriously exhausted, nor debilitated in body or mind ; although perhaps nervously irritated and a little faint from fasting :—all of which are facts which it concerns us to remember.

While the military cordon is being formed around the summit of Calvary to keep off the by-standers, and the preparations are being made to place the prisoner on the cross, we may pause to examine this cross and form some correct notion of its construction, as well as of the punishment it inflicts :—a knowledge which is not only absolutely necessary to any kind of comprehension of the subjects to be considered, but which we are sadly deficient in. We must, therefore, ask the Reader, not only to carefully consider the descriptions which will be given, but to resolutely displace from his mind the false images and notions of crosses and crucifixions which have been placed there by ignorant or designing priests, authors and artists, and to substitute the true ones.

Doctor Stroud, a learned *Christian physician*, has written a work entitled—"Physical causes of the death of Christ," from which we have largely drawn our facts in regard to crosses and crucifixions, and from which, also, we shall quote freely, italicizing as we shall deem necessary. This learned Doctor tells us, that the cross and crucifixion "has often been erroneously represented by painters, poets and devotional writers." And, after stating that Salmatius and Lipsius had made exhaustive researches into the matter, and that he relied upon their labors, he concludes that, "From these and similar authorities it is clearly ascertained, that the punishment of crucifixion was peculiarly painful, *lingering* and

ignominious. The cross consisted of a strong upright post, sharpened at the lower end by which it was fixed in the ground, having a *short bar or stake* projecting from its *middle*, and a longer transverse beam joined near the top. As the *middle bar*, although an important appendage, has been almost universally overlooked by modern authors, it will be proper here to insert the account given of it by some of the early Fathers of the Church and founded on personal observation. ‘The structure of the cross,’ says Iræneus, ‘has *five* ends or summits, two in length, two in breadth, and *one in the middle* on which the *crucified rested*.’ Justin Martyr, in like manner, speaks of ‘that end projecting from the *middle* [of the upright post] *like a horn* on which the crucified persons were *seated* ;’ and the language of Tertullian, who wrote a little later, exactly corresponds — ‘a part, and indeed a principle part of the cross, is any post which is affixed in an upright position ; but to us the entire cross is imputed, including the transverse beam, and the *projecting bar which serves as a seat*.’”

Thus, we plainly learn from the early Fathers of the Church, that we have been grossly deluded in relation to the character of the cross and the punishment of crucifixion. We have been taught to believe that the sufferer hung his almost entire weight upon large nails driven through the body of his hands and into a cross-bar above his head ; while a single spike was driven through both of his feet and into the upright post,—these nails through the hands and feet being his only support. This whole conception we find to be radically false and grossly delusive as to the nature and degree of the suffering in-

flicted. The facts are, that the body was not supported, to any extent, by either the fastenings of the hands or feet. The hands and arms were stretched out horizontally along the cross-bar and fastened to it, to prevent the sufferer from struggling to release himself, and to keep him in his *seat*. There are strong reasons for believing that the whole story about the use of nails is a subsequent fabrication ; for it certainly was not a necessary requisite of crucifixion. Nor is it consistent with the beliefs and conduct of the Romans with reference to Jesus, who in everything else so favored him, that they should have put themselves to the inconvenience of adding this unnecessary cruelty to his punishment. Nor is the fact of nailing of the *feet* mentioned, even in the Gospels. Nor is the nailing of the hands mentioned in either of the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion : the place where it ought to have been mentioned, had it occurred. Nor does either of the Gospels ever mention or refer to such a fact, except the fourth Gospel. That Gospel appears to refer, inferentially, to the nailing of the hands, in describing Jesus' mode of making himself known to his disciples upon his re-appearance among them after the crucifixion. It says that Jesus "shewed them his hands and his side." Neither of the other Gospels mentions such an occurrence. On the contrary, Luke mentions this exhibition of his person, but in an entirely different way. Luke has it, that the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost, and that to convince them that he was still in the flesh, Jesus said to them—"Behold my hands and *feet*, that it is myself : handle me and see ; for a spirit hath not *flesh and bones*, as ye see me have ;" and he then showed

them his hands and feet. Here we have nothing about the "side," or about holes in the hands or side, but a simple and natural invitation to convince themselves of his bodily presence by examining his hands and feet,—the parts of his flesh which were not covered by his clothing. The fourth Gospel also tells us, that Thomas being incredulous, Jesus afterwards invited him to thrust his hand into his side, etc. This whole matter about Thomas, and the spear thrust, and the hole in the side (big enough to thrust a man's *hand* in it, and yet made by the *point* of a *spear*!), and the pleasant idea of having a man thrust his hand into such a wound, when three days old, is confined to the fourth Gospel, and is directly discredited by Luke's account. There were controversial reasons for inserting these statements in the fourth Gospel, which furnish a sufficient motive for the attempt to show, that Jesus was actual flesh and blood, and had been a real *bodily* sufferer. For, although the subsequent disciples of Jesus did not believe him to have been a ghost, there early grew up a belief, among many, that he was not a real flesh-and-blood-human, but a mere simulachre or divine *semblance* of a man, who neither did, nor could suffer. To forestall this heretical notion, it was deemed necessary, in this supplementary Gospel, to exhibit some striking evidences of the actual humanity and human suffering of Jesus, as well as of his actual divinity, upon which that Gospel takes so high a pitch; the difficulty to be met being twofold:—one set of believers contending that Jesus was a mere man, and another set believing him a mere God, and consequently incapable of real death or suffering—a doctrine fatal to that of atonement. While, therefore, we discredit this whole sug-

gestion about the nailing the hands of Jesus to the cross, it does not conflict with our theory or materially affect it. For, as there was no weight bearing on the hands or nails, the mere fact of a wrought nail being driven through the skin or flesh of the hand to keep it in place would not materially hasten death, and certainly would not materially affect the result as to life or death during the brief time that Jesus remained upon the cross; although it would have inflicted additional pain. If, however, we would estimate the facts at their real worth, we will not go beyond the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion itself, but regard Jesus as having been seated on the cross in the usual way, with his hands or arms *tied* to the arms of the cross-bar. As to the spike through his feet, it is a pure invention of after times, to enhance the agony of Jesus and excite the pity of the beholder. It is not only a sheer invention, but an impossible suggestion. It would be impossible to nail one foot, much less both, with a single nail, to the upright post of a cross, against which the feet would rest at a right angle, with the heel to the post; unless, indeed, the knees were drawn up at a right angle.

The object in inflicting crucifixion was *not* to violently destroy life, or hasten death, by wounds or by direct and overpowering inflictions, but the very *reverse* of this was the object, namely: to *prolong* the suffering as much as possible, and to destroy life by the most *lingering torture*

and exhaustion. The victims of it were not *killed*, but were allowed to *perish*, through want and suffering. This was the peculiarity and horror of the punishment. To be killed was a boon always prayed for, and sometimes granted as a special favor. The prisoner was *set astride of the wooden horn or saddle* which projected out from the middle of the upright post, with his back to the post. On this he *sat*, and on this he rested the whole weight of his body, as if he were sitting astride the limb of a tree, with his back to the tree, and his feet about twenty-four inches from the ground. To secure him in that one, exhausting position, his arms were stretched out horizontally along the two arms of the cross-bar, and fastened to them. The prisoner was disrobed. And thus, confined and naked, under the burning sun or freezing cold, through the weary and agonizing days and the still more weary and desolate nights, and through storm and tempest, the doomed sufferer sat in his cramped and unchangeable position, and wore his life away through hunger, thirst, want and suffering, and through alternate sinkings and rallyings of his oppressed nature and often through many and prolonged faintings and revivals and many weary hours of insensibility,—such as are incident to all prolonged torture. As a special favor to the sufferer or his friends this prolonged torture was sometimes ended by a violent death, after the prisoner had suffered it for two or three days and nights.

As to the character of this punishment, Dr. Stroud says: "The bodily sufferings attending this punishment were doubtless great, but either through ignorance or

design, have been much exaggerated." He declares that the crucified die chiefly by a "slow process of nervous irritation and exhaustion," and that "this would, of course, be liable to variety, depending upon differences of age, sex and constitution, and other circumstances; but for persons to live *two or more days* on the cross was a *common occurrence*, and there were even instances of some *who having been taken down, recovered and revived.*" This learned physician has been at the pains of collecting a large number of instances of crucifixion. A reference to a few of these cases will prepare us to understand that of Jesus'. The apostle Andrew continued *preaching* from the cross for *two days* before he expired. Bishop Victor who was crucified with his *head downwards* survived two days. Calliopus, a handsome youth, lived twenty-four hours on the cross "after suffering most cruel tortures by being *scourged, broken on a wheel, and partially burnt!*" Captain Clapperton was told, in Soudan, that "wretches on the cross *generally linger three days.*" Chaban, a captain of banditti and about the age of Jesus, who was executed at Salonica in A. D. 1830, exemplified what a healthy man of that age can endure in such matters. The Doctor tells us that, "As a preparatory exercise, he was suspended by his arms for twelve hours. * * * The following day a hook was thrust into his side, by which he was suspended to a tree, and there hung, enduring the agony of thirst till the *third evening.*" Hassan Corso, at the age of thirty-eight years, was executed at Algiers in A. D. 1556. Having been cast from a considerable height onto the chingan or hook," he remained in that torture *three* whole days and two nights with the hook through his right side ribs."

These few examples suffice to show, that ordinary crucifixion did not usually destroy life for at least two or three days, and that young and healthy men like Jesus could withstand vastly more appalling tortures for that length of time. The most delicate or feeble could not be expected to expire under twenty-four hours; while the more extreme cases of endurance under crucifixion show, that men have survived on the cross for four, five, six and sometimes seven days and nights. And, if we are to credit church histories, there was an instance of still more prolonged endurance. In the persecution under Diocletian (we are told), one Timotheus and Maura his wife, "after enduring many horrible tortures with inconceivable constancy" were "crucified together: and having hung alive on the cross for *nine days and nights*, mutually exhorting and comforting each other, expired on the *tenth day*." It may fairly be claimed, then, that a person of the age and condition of Jesus, and subject to no more rigorous treatment *than he received*, would live on the cross rather beyond than under *three days and nights*

Having acquired some truthful conception of the cross, and of the nature of the suffering and death it inflicted and of the probable duration of life under its inflictions, it becomes important to inquire as to the hour or time of day at which Jesus was placed upon the cross. On this subject the Gospels are in irreconcilable conflict. Two of them are indefinite as to it. The

author of the first Gospel (taking the popular Christian assumption as to the authorship of the several Gospels) was in the city, but was in hiding with the other apostles, and was not present at the crucifixion. The only, and very uncertain clue which he gives us as to the time, is to be found in the following words : " Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land to the ninth hour." This darkness is evidently intended by the author to cover some part of the proceedings, and is put forward as an evidence of Nature's mourning for man's final rejection, condemnation and punishment of the Son of God. To make this sympathy complete, its manifestation should commence with his final sentence, or at least from the commencement of his punishment,—namely, his scourging at the palace preparatory to his march to Calvary. It would seem difficult to find any other distinct point entitled to decisive preference, since the actual humiliation and scourging, which was a legitimate and necessary part of the punishment, commenced before Jesus left the palace, and the sentence was partly executed there, and was still being executed while walking to Calvary and vicariously performing the required bearing of his cross, and while being disrobed and fastened to the cross. It is, however, capable of being referred to the commencement of his punishment on the cross, after all things were complete. If Matthew meant to apply it to the real commencement of the punishment at the palace, then it will not only conform more nearly to the possibilities of the case, but will correspond with, and be confirmed by, John's account, which places the final condemnation and delivery for execution at the sixth hour—the hour when Matthew says the darkness commenced.

Luke's account is not definite, but places the commencement of the crucifixion proper, at not later than the sixth hour. To Luke the matter was all mere hearsay. Mark, who like Luke writes from hearsay, tells us, that it commenced at the "third hour." John, who was the *only eye-witness*, says that, when Pilate brought Jesus forth from his palace to deliver him up for execution, and exclaimed "Behold your King," it was *then*, already, the "sixth hour." By the method of computing time in the Gospels the *day* commenced at *sunset*, and the hours during daylight were numbered from sunrise, and on serially through twelve consecutive hours. As it was then near the vernal equinox the sun rose at about *six o'clock* of our time, which would correspond with their *first hour* of the day. So that Mark's "third hour" corresponded with our "nine o'clock;" while their "sixth hour" corresponded with our "twelve o'clock," and their "ninth hour" with our "three o'clock p. m." If the Christian pretensions as to the authorship of the Gospels be correct, the canons of evidence will not permit us to hesitate in adopting the clear and positive declaration of the eye-witness John, in preference to indefinite statements of others, or to those where the account was based on the general belief or mere hearsay evidence. The statement of John that it was about the sixth hour or midday when Pilate brought Jesus out to his judgment seat, and before he ordered him to execution, is also more than corroborated by the general facts. It is scarcely possible, indeed, to believe that Jesus was even finally *sentenced* as early as twelve o'clock, as John alleges. When we remember the events which had happened since daylight on that *same day*, we are

almost startled at the suggestion of their having happened in some six hours. Luke says, that "as soon as it was *day*, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council," and that they there examined, tried and condemned him; and that then, "the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate." The assembling of this large body of men, their leading Jesus into their council chamber, their examinations and consultations, and their decisions and final action, all occurred *after daylight*. They then marched in a body to the palace of Pilate. Then we must imagine the necessary delays in getting communications to and from Pilate, into whose palace they could not enter, and in securing his attendance; and estimate the probable time of day at which a great ruler could be expected or induced to enter upon the trial of such a cause. Those who can conceive all this to have been done even by nine o'clock must have little acquaintance with the necessary time required for such proceedings. To accomplish such results, now, by noon, would be considered an achievement by those who are familiar with the proceedings of large deliberative bodies and with official intercourse and action. Besides these proceedings, we have the first arraignment and trial before Pilate, and all the arguments and the manœuvres and counter-manœuvres between Pilate and the Jews, and the various comings-in and goings-out of Pilate, and his private examinations of Jesus, and finally his transfer of the prisoner to Herod. Then we have the whole Sanhedrim going in a body to another part of the city with the prisoner, and Herod has to be seen, and a new process of charging, examining and trying the prisoner

has to be gone through with, and all the time taken up in the mockeries and royal-robing of Jesus has to elapse, and another march back again, after his acquittal, before the matter is again brought before Pilate : all of which must have required a very considerable time. We have then a repetition of the scenes on the former trial, and all the manœuvres of Pilate to save Jesus, which we have already considered, before Pilate was compelled to yield. Is it possible that all these proceedings only lasted until noon, the time asserted by John ? Does not this eye-witness stand *more* than corroborated by the facts ? Can any mortal give the preference to "hear-says" placing it at an earlier date ?

We have then the pretended scourging and other delays before starting, including Pilate's sending for water, and washing his hands of the blood of Jesus, the procurement of the cross, and of a guard. We have then the slow march on foot through the city and out to the adjacent height of Calvary, then the setting of the crosses in the ground, the preparing and affixing the sign-board on the cross of Jesus, the disrobing of him for execution, etc., before we reach the point of actual crucifixion. From the time of the sentence up to the time of fastening the prisoner on the cross, the intervening events, making no allowance for slight accidental delays, can by no means be estimated as requiring less than about two hours. Indeed two hours seems entirely too short a time. From John's account, then, backed by the resistless force of the facts, we cannot, in all fairness, place the actual crucifixion at an earlier hour than *two o'clock in the afternoon*. It is necessary to remark,

at once, that our theory, although aided and made *a fortiori* true by John's account, is by no means dependent upon it, since, even if Mark's absurd mistake were true, it would still apply with full force.

All the Gospels claim that Jesus expired at the "ninth hour :"—that is, at three o'clock in the afternoon. This would leave but about one hour in which he lived and suffered on the cross. If too much time has been allowed for the occurrences subsequent to midday, when he was sentenced, the excess, of course, must be added to this hour of life and suffering. The time at which he was taken down from the cross is nowhere stated, but is left to inference from the facts given. Dr. Stroud, in view of all the facts, says that, "Between the time of his death and that when he was pierced by the soldier, the *longest* interval which can with any probability be assigned is *two hours*." He continues to say that "It was probably *between four and five* in the afternoon when the Roman soldier came and broke the legs of the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus." This would fix the time during which Jesus remained on the cross after he was supposed to have expired, at something over an hour ; thus making his entire stay on the cross something over two hours ; certainly not over *three hours in all* ; which, as we shall find, was the actual time asserted by one of the early Fathers of the Church. And when we reflect, that the three men executed had to be taken down and disposed of ; that Jesus was actually taken down and conveyed to the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, and his body prepared and dressed for burial, and all before sunset or six o'clock, we cannot

think that Dr. Stroud has over-estimated the time required for those purposes. Before commenting on all this, Let us see how these three hours were spent by those who participated in the proceedings.

The occurrences recorded of the crucifixion exhibit, so far as they could be expected to exhibit, evidences of the truth of our theory; and are as numerous, also, as could be expected from the Gospels. We may pass by the few asserted remarks made by Jesus in answer to the persiflage of the on-lookers, as but little concerning the question under consideration. They were but few, and are of more than questionable reliability. If Jesus expressed pity for the ignorance of his Jewish persecutors, or prayed for them, it was highly commendable, but it was also the first time in his life that he had ever given them such an exhibition, and it was certainly in direct contradiction of his entire conduct towards them. There has probably been some subsequent embellishing of the record at this point. That there has been such an embellishment in the only other reply of Jesus, his worshippers should be the first to believe. For his assurance to the "penitent thief," that he should sup with him in Paradise that *very night* was certainly a grave mistake, if we are to credit Christian creeds and his own direct confession. For the scriptures and creeds tell us that he first "descended into hell;" and when he reappeared to his disciples on the *third* day after his declaration to

the thief on the cross, he himself expressly declared, that he had *not ascended to his Father*, up to that time ; while the question still was, not one of "supping in Paradise," but of far less ambrosial feasting ; for among his first questions to his disciples was—"Have ye here any *meat* ? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb." And even many weeks after that he was found cooking his own fish on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. So that there must have been a mistake about this matter, somewhere. The thief might have supped in Paradise alone, but not with Jesus.

Pilate himself, it seems, wrote the inscription for the top of the cross—"This is the King of the Jews." This was felt to be a galling insult by the Jews, and the chief priests besought him to alter it so as to read "he *said* he was King of the Jews ;" but Pilate refused to withdraw his barbed arrow, and sullenly replied—"What I have written I have written." They might tell *that* to Cæsar, if they liked. Pilate was still galled and determined, and the hour for conciliating his enemies had passed.

It appears that the military cordon was of such dimensions as to forbid any very near approach by the by-standers,—as we find that even his mother and female friends were compelled to stand "afar off." For it is impossible to believe that his mother, Mary Magdalen, or John would fail to approach and stand by him, in this hour of suffering, as closely as they were permitted. That they, alone, should have stood "afar off" is not

credible. They were near enough, as others were, for the voice of Jesus to reach them. Probably some forty or fifty feet might approximate the limit of approach.

The young Galilean appears to have borne his sufferings for about an hour with calmness and fortitude, and to have maintained the utmost outward gravity and composure. As three o'clock approached, however, the continuance in the one painful and unrelieved position began to tell severely upon his powerful and elastic, but exquisitely sensitive nervous organization. That such a nature suffers more than others that are less sensitive, under like conditions, is evident; and, as our physician has already assured us, the great and fatal strain of this punishment was upon the nervous system. The scene in Gethsemane gives us evidence of how readily and how extremely Jesus could suffer, and with what elasticity he could recover. His sensitive organization was strung to its highest pitch to bear the persistent and accumulating torture. His position, comparatively painless at first, grew continually more torturing. His will was put into ever higher requisition to control and sustain his physical nature under the fiery trial which was driving his nerves into ever higher restlessness, wilder agitation and threatened revolt:—an enforced control which both foreboded and produced the suddenness of the disaster, when it could no longer be maintained. Nature, so determinedly held in a defiant resistance to an onslaught which but grew in intensity with the length of the resistance, would,

necessarily, finally compensate itself in utter demoralization. Such a nervous organization as that of Jesus suffers so keenly that, when held by the will-power with an exhaustive persistence, its recoil is very great and its prostration profound and prolonged ; but certainly not fatal upon the first surrender. That the very first yielding of any nervous organization, much less such an elastic, youthful and vigorous organization as that of Jesus, to the gradual torture of mere nervous irritation, should be fatal to life, is wholly incredible.

It would seem that the forced stoicism of Jesus, and his effort to keep his mind clear and his nerves steady, had borne Jesus up until near three in the afternoon, and that nature then began to grow sick under its prolonged effort and its ever-increasing and torturing irritation, and to give evident signs of flowing back upon itself and fainting under its unrelieved burden. His nature, like all highly sensitive ones, had much of the *woman* in it. It took wild fright at the approach of danger, while it was courageous under actual suffering. It would inevitably suffer exquisitely, and faint early and long and often, under prolonged torture. He might survive the sturdy rogues who were punished with him, but the successive effects of the torture upon him and them, respectively, would be markedly different. His more highly wrought sensitive and psychical organization could assume a stoicism which would temporarily rival the results of the comparative insensibility of their coarser natures, but it would *only* be *assumed* ; and his more exquisite suffering would force an earlier and more complete temporary surrender. On the other hand, his

flexible and elastic nature would retain its recuperative powers under more profound and prolonged prostrations. Jesus felt, thus early, that his nervous irritation and progressive torture was hurrying him on to that faintness and sickness which his will could have no power to control, and he called out that he "thirsted." Thus far he had kept clear-minded and self-possessed: he felt that he could do so but a few moments longer. He had refused the "mercy cup" from his sympathizers; he now appealed to his Roman guard. The required and prepared drink was at hand, and was *instantly given and received* without question:—a drink other than the usual "mercy cup," and one which seems not to have been allowed to the other sufferers, and which was ostensibly given to relieve the sufferings of the prisoner, at his own request, after his punishment had commenced;—a thing most unusual, if not wholly without warrant. Certainly the friends of the prisoner would not, in ordinary cases, be allowed to thus alleviate the very intended punishment of the condemned, even if allowed to approach them at all. Possibly, if not probably, the person who instantly "*ran and filled a sponge with vinegar*," was Joseph of Arimathea; being within the lines by special permission, and for just such purposes. Whoever it was, they were prepared to *run* to his relief upon the instant, and had provided themselves with both the special drink and with a sponge and a reed or rod to administer it. They understood and were prepared for the occasion. The bystanders supposed, or were led to believe, that this unnamed person gave him "vinegar" to drink. But, if so, What had been *put in the vinegar*? Nothing? Possibly. But it would have been in singular conformity

with the facts, and with the manifested purposes of those under whose control he then was, that something besides vinegar should have been provided for him. Very certainly they might have done it: and the results were very confirmatory of the suggestion that such a provision *was* made. By whose order had this drink (even of vinegar) been prepared and brought there? We are told in Smith's Bible Dictionary, that death by crucifixion "was at last the result of gradual benumbing and *starvation*;" and that "*before* the nailing or binding took place, a medicated cup was given, out of kindness, to *confuse the senses and deaden the pangs* of the sufferer, usually of wine and myrrh, because myrrh was sporific. Our Lord refused it that his *senses might be clear*." But Who, we repeat, ordered the *unusual* drink which was furnished him *after* he was on the cross, and at his own demand? It could not have been prepared or brought or administered by the Centurion or guard without express orders, nor could it have been allowed by them to be administered by others; since the very object of the guard's remaining with the sufferer was to prevent his rescue or his relief from the want and hunger which constituted the very severity of the punishment. Even as simple vinegar, the supply was both unusual and unlawful. It is worthy of special notice, also, that Jesus should have refused the legitimate "mercy cup," and then have called for aid to which he had no right; and that he evidently and confessedly refused the "mercy-cup" to keep his mind clear as long as possible. It would be well to note, also, whether the drink given had the refreshing and reviving *effect* natural to vinegar, or whether it had the precise opposite effect.

The time intervening between the administering of the drink and his supposed death cannot be made precisely definite, but the Gospel accounts leave no doubt that he almost immediately—within at most but a few minutes, fell into that state which was claimed to be death. He was already in that almost suffocating and deathly sickness which announces the approach of syncope, or fainting from torture—that point at which man's conquered nature recoils, and the heart and other vital organs seem to cease to struggle, leaving the body a pallid and ghastly semblance of death. As Jesus felt this deathly sickness and faintness approaching, he cried with a loud and agonized voice—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" 'And John tells us that, after receiving the drink, he said—"it is finished," and that he then "bowed his head and gave up the ghost;" showing that, instead of being relieved and revived by the supposed vinegar, he soon drooped into insensibility under its influence; and that he himself did not expect it to revive him, since he declared the object was accomplished so soon as he took it, and bowed his head.

At this point the scene became harrowing rather than interesting to the Jews. The ghastly and silent spectacle of that ashen face and drooping head was not an attractive sight to those who had forced them there. Besides, the last hours of the "preparation day" were rapidly passing away, and the necessities, as well as the inclination, of the multitude led them to return to the city. Accordingly, Luke tells us that, at this point, "*all the people that came together to see that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts,*

and *returned*”—(xxiii. 48). From three o'clock in the afternoon, when Jesus first gave way and was supposed to have expired, the Centurion, with his little squad of Roman soldiers, and the immediate friends of Jesus, were left alone on that solitary mount, outside the city, with no unfriendly observers and no prying scrutinizers to inspect or criticise their course or conduct. From the very time of the supposed death, the favorers and friends of Jesus had untrammelled and *unobserved* sway over everything, and did and said what they pleased. The only persons who can be inferred to have remained, were Joseph of Arimathea, who was concerned in the matter to the last, and the little clump of Galilean friends who “stood afar off”—John, Mary Magdalen, the mother of Jesus, etc.

The time which Jesus would appear to have remained in this state has already been shown to have been about an hour and a half,—possibly a little more or a little less, but by no reasonable supposition beyond two hours. During this period his friend Joseph of Arimathea had gone “*boldly* unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus, and Pilate *marvelled* if he were *already dead* ; and calling unto him the Centurion, he asked him whether he had been *any while dead*. And when he knew of the Centurion, he *gave the body to Joseph*.” This account, taken from Mark, is substantially that of the other synoptical Gospels, and ends the account of that day's proceedings, save the statement of the fact of the depositing of Jesus in a large new sepulchre of Joseph, hewn in the side of a rock. Whatever else we find touching the crucifixion or his treatment on the cross, we find in John *alone*. And, although there are satisfactory evi-

dences that these special statements of John were after-thoughts, inserted for mythic and doctrinal purposes, we are under no necessity to discard them ; since they are by no means dangerous facts,—but in fact, rather serve than injure our theory ;—although they prolong and complicate the investigation.

John tells us that, to get the whole matter over before six o'clock in the evening when the sabbath commenced, they despatched the two thieves by breaking their legs ; for, up to this time even, the sturdy rogues had neither fainted nor complained ; although they had received neither relief nor attention. But John says that, “when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs ; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and *forthwith* came there out blood and water.” After this he was delivered into the hands of his wealthy friend Joseph, to be deposited in his newly-hewn sepulchre, and he was no more seen by the public, nor by his disciples, until he secretly appeared to his followers on the morning after the sabbath. To prevent long repetitions of the events or narrations which will claim our attention subsequent to his removal from the cross, they will be considered as they are referred to in the investigations and arguments in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WAS HE DEAD?

WE have followed Jesus through his arrest, trial and punishment, and into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. And, although there are subsequent evidences which bear upon the main question with overwhelming force, we have reached a point at which it is proper to put, and to partially argue, the main question,—namely: Was Jesus dead beyond the possibility of recovery by natural means and agencies when he was taken from the cross? From this point we may properly look back upon the entire course of facts, and ask ourselves the question—Have we reason to *expect* that this man will revive, or can *be* revived, from the evidences touching the question occurring prior to, and during, his punishment on the cross? If we shall have found such evidences, it will then remain for us to examine and determine whether there are evidences of his actually having so revived by natural means, to be found in the subsequent facts and in the conduct and language of the persons concerned.

Antecedent evidence of such a fact as the one we are investigating, is necessarily composed of facts showing adequate motives and an intention to save the accused party ; of facts showing that the parties concerned had sufficient opportunities, means and power to effectuate their purposes under the actual circumstances of the case ; and the facts tending to prove that they were actually proceeding in a manner calculated to effect their purpose of saving the accused, and that what they actually did was calculated to result in continued life, and not in death. If these evidences of an intention and determination to save, and of adequate opportunities, means and power to save, and of adequate acts to have resulted in actually saving the accused and condemned party be satisfactory, then the presumption is direct and violent that he *was* saved ; and, when followed by proof of his being known to have been living afterwards, this proof becomes conclusive. The consistency of all the real facts with this presumption will make it almost resistless, even without this latter fact, and all the more resistless as those concurring facts are singular or exceptional in their nature, and could, with no probability, be supposed to unite in congruity and conformity with the theory upon which the presumption is based unless that theory and presumption were true. It is manifest, also, that the difficulty or impossibility of our reconciling the whole or any part of the facts with any other supposition and conclusion than our own will greatly add to the strength of our own.

Looking back over the ground we have past, Have we not already shown sufficient proofs and reasons to sustain or establish the presumption against actual and final death? We have seen that Jesus was not only as human in the face of this last danger as he had ever been, but that he proved himself more singularly frail than we had hitherto found him, and demonstrated, throughout, the possession of an organization and nature admirably capable of performing the *rôle* assigned to him by our theory. We find a succession of rare and singular facts occurring in connection with his betrayal, hiding and arrest, which are unaccounted for and inexplicable by the Christian theory, but which at once explain each other and naturally and consistently unite and interlink themselves into a single and consecutive chain of events which are in conformity with our conception of the motives, characters and conduct of the parties concerned, and which point to, and, at the same time, are appropriated and explained by, our theory of the whole facts. We have had the clearest evidence that Jesus had efficient friends or advocates about the centres of power in Jerusalem, and friendly coadjutors in the Sanhedrim itself. We have seen that, through means of these friends, sympathizers and coadjutors, he was promptly, though secretly, advised of the intentions and movements of his enemies—of both his intended betrayal and of his actual betrayal and approaching arrest; and was comforted and encouraged, manifestly, by their assurances of powerful and faithful support. We have seen that the personal situations, interests and safety of the most powerful coadjutors and advocates of Jesus, both Jewish and Roman, controlled or influenced the times and

modes of their advocacy and assistance of him, but we find, also, that these considerations neither deterred them from their purpose nor slackened their energies or action in furtherance of it. For we find both the open and the unsuspected evidences of their presence, purpose and efficiency, from first to last. We find that, from the situation of the parties, much of what they did would necessarily be kept strictly secret from the public, but that they had every opportunity for secret conferences and co-operations, and that they had the will, the means and the facilities for executing their purposes. We have seen the evidences of their open support before the Sanhedrim, and upon his trial, and in the various special, significant, and evidently pre-determined favors to Jesus in the process of executing his sentence and in disposing of his body. We constantly find the evidences of pre-concerted arrangements and preparations and of concert of action between these Roman and Jewish aiders of Jesus. We find that a special drink, together with singular but apt means of administering it, were provided especially for Jesus, to be given to him after his punishment had commenced and had proceeded to the production of certain results, and that it was then administered to him, with such marked alacrity as to indicate both favor and design. We find evidence that Jesus was apprised of these designs and efforts, for he not only refused the relief from the legitimate "mercy cup" which was tendered him, in order to retain his reason and self-control, but he gave a warning cry for help, as he approached the fainting point, when he had no legitimate right to expect such help or relief; and, without a word, partook of the drink prepared for him.

We find that the centurion who had immediate control of the proceedings, subject to the orders of Pilate, was evidently advised of the purpose to save the prisoner, as appears from the whole course of proceedings and his treatment of Jesus, as well as from the fact that he left his post and went with Joseph of Arimathea to announce the condition of Jesus and secure his delivery to Joseph: for the account in Mark clearly shows that he was present or at hand when Pilate called him, and had not to be sent for to Calvary. The facts, even thus far, are conclusive as to the desire and willingness both to serve and save him as far as possible, and are violently presumptive of the pre-concert, determination and *concerted effort* to save him by the powerful Jewish and Roman friends already indicated. It was a high *duty*, indeed, under the then existing state of things, not only that his few powerful, but secret encouragers and coadjutors in the Jewish government should do their utmost to save him from the penalties of acts which they had secretly encouraged, but that Pilate should use every artifice and power he was master of to defeat a humiliating and coerced judgment which he would never have rendered, or would have openly defied, if he had not been compelled and restrained by an unjust personal advantage held over him by the common enemy.

We have seen, also, that Pilate's power to save was only limited by the necessity of such secrecy as would prevent a successful charge of complicity in his escape. And we have seen, not only that a most propitious concurrence of circumstances aided in saving the accused, and encouraged the hope and effort to save him, but also

furnished the most admirable opportunities for secrecy when secrecy was most needed; since the necessary opportunities were thereby furnished for consultation and pre-arrangement, and, when the hour came for despatching the prisoners, caused none to be present to watch or criticise their movements or to observe the evidences as to the condition of Jesus when taken from the cross. From the very time Jesus gave way they had had neither obstruction nor observation to fear, and unless Jesus actually died at three o'clock. there was really nothing to fear for his safety.

With such an array of concurring facts and probabilities before us, without a *single adverse fact*, we must be prepared to find, that Jesus was not dead when taken from the cross, unless the crucifixion itself actually killed him by the "ninth hour" in spite of them; and thus defeated the hopes and purposes of his friends and supporters.

We have, then, to inquire whether the facts of the crucifixion, as a whole, occurring before or at the "ninth hour," justified others then, or can now justify us, in affirming the death of Jesus at that hour. In determining that question, we may first consider whether there was anything peculiar in the case of Jesus which would take it out of the ordinary routine in such cases. To this there must certainly be an affirmative reply. But it is also equally certain that such exceptional or unusual

facts and influences were all *opposed* to the supposition of his death. We have seen that Jesus was in good bodily health and in good mental and bodily condition when he went upon the cross, and that the treatment which he had had directly tended to insure that condition. He was, naturally, a supple, vigorous and healthy man, reared to a healthy trade, and had led a life calculated to insure physical health and vigor. He was about thirty-three years of age—in the very prime of his powers of endurance and vitality. So far as we know, or have reason to believe, there was nothing to give the slightest countenance to the belief that he would not resist death on the cross as long as the best; although, as we have seen, there were reasons for expecting that he would temporarily give way under the torture earlier and perhaps oftener than more phlegmatic natures,—but only to recover oftener and from more extreme prostrations. It would scarcely be too much to say, that no man ever went upon the cross with a greater prospect of resisting death than did Jesus, with his youth, health and abundant vitality, and it is certainly not too much to say, that no man was ever more favored by his executioners, either before or after he went upon the cross. Whatever allowance is to be made, therefore, for age, vigor, health, condition and treatment, must all be made in favor of a prolonged endurance of his punishment.

Nor are we to presume anything in favor of death at the “ninth hour” from the fact that the Roman Centurion gave currency to that idea,—even by pretending to think he had died miraculously as the Son of God. Because, firstly, if we are right as to Pilate’s purposes, it

was precisely the idea which it was their purpose to originate and encourage. That he should have gone to report the matter to Pilate, does not at all conflict with this view ; as it was a mere precaution taken by Pilate to avoid the suspicion which would or might attach to his order to deliver the body to his friends, at their request, after a punishment so unprecedentedly short, and without further evidence of his death or ordering him to be despatched to make the matter sure. Knowing all this, the Centurion was but carrying out his master's views and instructions and the wishes of Joseph of Arimathea, in officially confirming the fact of death at the "ninth hour." Secondly, the Centurion was not competent to decide upon the difference between the actual condition of Jesus and that of death, unless he knew his condition to be a designed one or not that of death. He was incompetent to determine from the appearances. For, be it remembered, that there is neither evidence nor hint that the Centurion or any other person ever even felt whether his pulse or heart continued to beat or whether there might not still have been even slight breathing. So far as the record goes, no person either sought, or offered to seek, for any evidence of his death further than such as could be acquired by merely looking at him. And, from such evidence, no one could determine it,—not even a physician. The whole course of the Centurion shows that there was no desire or intention to have the matter *tested*. Had he seen even clear evidence of his being alive,—seen him breathe or move,—he would have ignored it. And he might have actually seen many such evidences which were imperceptible to those "afar off."

Still less are we to infer anything in favor of death because the people left after the scene at the "ninth hour," nor because they might have actually supposed that he had died. For it was not only a matter of no moment, even to his persecutors, as they supposed that he certainly would be despatched or die in some form before the matter was through with, but the people had far less opportunity for judging of the fact of death than the Centurion and quite as little capacity for it. Indeed, the people neither had, nor sought, the opportunity of testing or the means of judging the fact of death. We know not even what they actually thought as to what had really occurred at the time in question. We only know, that they left after witnessing this first round in the conflict with Agony, and that they had sufficient reason for going, even if they had *not* supposed him to be dead. Nor would their supposition of his death be the slightest evidence of that fact, under the circumstances. To tell the difference between a fainting from torture which is fatal, and one which is not fatal, is a matter of professional skill, and one which requires the minutest examinations and the most careful and sagacious methods and tests: and, even then, the most experienced physicians may be unable to detect the presence of vitality where it actually exists. The difficulty of determining the fact of death is recognized by all physicians, even in our day, when physiological knowledge and medical skill have reached a far higher point of perfection than in the days of Jesus. There are conditions of the human body produced by a number of causes, which so resemble death that the most intelligent physicians are mistaken or disagree upon the question

of death, after very careful examinations and tests. That ordinary observers should be mistaken as to the presence of death is neither singular nor of rare occurrence ; but, on the contrary, is of alarmingly frequent occurrence. The number of persons who have been even buried alive and who revived afterwards is much greater than is generally supposed. Besides the number who revive before burial after being supposed dead, and the fewer and more fortunate cases in which persons have been accidentally saved from vaults and tombs, it has been found by those engaged in removing grave-yards, that the number of bodies and skeletons which furnished proofs of survival after burial is quite appalling. The number who survive after being left for dead on the battle-field, is quite considerable. Cases of survival where persons have been legally executed, would, of course, present the strongest considerations for concealment, since an exposure would only re-endanger the life of the unfortunate, and bring trouble upon the officers and "resurrectionists." Our sheriffs have ceased to trust to their own skill in determining death by hanging, and call upon experts to decide for them ; recognizing their own incapacity to determine so difficult a question. Notwithstanding the reasons for concealment, however, it is known that many persons have survived legal executions. Crucifixion, as Dr. Stroud informs us, has furnished its examples of revival after the persons have been supposed to be dead, and taken from the cross. It is manifest that the chances of such survivals are far greater in cases of the supposed death of vigorous and healthy persons, such as soldiers and convicts, whose vital capacities have been overcome by the punishment rather

than worn out by previous inflammatory or chronic diseases. In cases of death by execution or on the battlefield, also, the burials are far more hasty and reckless than in ordinary cases, and the chances of knowing the numbers who revive after supposed death, therefore, is much lessened in such cases. Both from reason and experience it may be asserted that, in no case, perhaps, is ordinary observation so likely to mislead unprofessional witnesses as in those where healthy persons are subjected to tortures which overcome nature and directly tend to produce fainting or swooning. The results which are witnessed in such scenes are greatly calculated to mislead all ordinary observers, and defy the judgment and determination of all ordinary observation. The unsupported assertions or notions of such witnesses, under such circumstances, are comparatively, if not wholly, worthless.

It is but fairly reasonable to say, then, that, at the time Jesus first gave way under his torture, and at which he is asserted to have died, there is no evidence, worth mentioning, that he actually *did die*, except the presumption to be derived from the mere *amount and character of the punishment he had received*. There having been nothing tending to show death in the manifestations themselves, and the conduct and notions of the officers and by-standers furnishing no valid evidence, under the circumstances,—those who sustain the Gospel assertions that he died at that time, have no other rational evidence than the presumption arising from the natural effect of the punishment received, to sustain their belief. Let us, then, consider the value of this evidence.

As the entire field of conjecture has been occupied in attempting to account for the *unaccountable* (because *unreal*) death of Jesus on the cross, it is important that we should briefly review them all, and estimate their several values. In doing this, we will commence with the most natural suggestion,—and the one asserted and relied upon in the New Testament, namely : that he died by the pains and exhaustion of crucifixion—that he was punished to death.

That multitudinous class of people who accept their opinions “ready-made,” and pass through life without ever attempting to investigate the basis of their inherited faiths, will be startled by the bare questioning of this long-assumed and gospel conclusion. But they will be still more startled when they are told that their belief is wholly incompatible with the facts as narrated in the Gospels themselves, and, also, that the most learned and sagacious Christian fathers, ancient and modern, have been driven, in the very teeth of the apostolic assertions, to admit that Jesus did *not* die from the sufferings of crucifixion, and to seek, at random, over the field of conjecture for other possible causes of death. Let us again turn to the pages of the learned Christian physician, Dr. Stroud, for his own opinion and those of the learned and pious authors from whom he so industriously quotes.

Dr. Stroud says that, “Although the matter has *never yet* been thoroughly investigated, it is interesting to observe that the *principal commentators on Scripture, both ancient and modern*, have either openly or tacitly adopted the *negative conclusion* here taken [namely : that

Jesus did *not* die by crucifixion], and that many of them have even suggested additional causes, by which, in conjunction with crucifixion, the Saviour's death might, in their opinion, have been induced. These causes have been proposed under various modifications which are all reducible to three, namely: supernatural agency, the wound inflicted by the soldier's spear, or an unusual degree of weakness—original or acquired. It will be the object of the following remarks to show that *neither* of these explanations is admissible, *all of them being at variance with well known facts*, and that *another* is therefore *absolutely requisite*. In the early times of Christianity, not long after its apostolic period, and when pretensions to miraculous power were still made and credited, it is by no means wonderful that the death of Christ should have been ascribed to supernatural influences, and this is, accordingly, the solution adopted by almost all the ancient Christian writers who have considered the subject. The opinion of Turtullian is thus briefly stated: '[Christ] when crucified spontaneously dismissed his spirit with a word, thus *preventing the office of the executioner*.' That of Origen is more full. 'Since,' says he, 'those crucified persons who were not stabbed suffer greater torment, and survive in great pain, sometimes the whole of the following night and even the next day; and since Jesus was not stabbed, and his enemies hoped that by his hanging long on the cross he would suffer the greater torment, he prayed the Father and was heard, and as soon as he had called was taken to the Father; or else, as one having power to lay down his life, he laid it down when he chose. This *prodigy* astonished the Centurion, who said, 'Truly this man was

the Son of God.' For it was a *miracle* that he who should otherwise perhaps have survived two days on the cross according to the custom of those who are crucified but not stabbed, should have been taken up *after three hours*, so that his death seems to have happened by the *favor of God*, and rather through the merit of his own prayer than through the violence of the cross.' Jerome remarks—'In the first place it must be declared that, for Jesus to lay down his life where he chose, and to take it up again, was an act of divine power.' * * * Cyprian follows in the same track—'That the Jewish rulers would deliver Christ to Pontius Pilate to be crucified, he had himself predicted, and the testimony of all the prophets had also previously declared that it was necessary for him to suffer, not that he might *feel*, but *conquer death*, and after he had suffered, to return to Heaven, that he might display the power of his divine majesty. The course of events correspond to this expectation ; for when he was crucified he *dismissed* his spirit of *his own accord*, *preventing the office of the executioner*, and also of his own accord rose from the dead on the third day.' The opinion of Theophylact is cited to the same effect. John Calvin is also quoted as follows :—'The circumstance that after breaking the legs of the two malefactors the soldier found Christ dead, and therefore did not assail his body, shows an *extraordinary operation of divine providence*. Profane persons may indeed say, that it is natural for one man to die sooner than another ; but whoever examines the whole series of the narrative will be *compelled* to ascribe the exemption of Christ from the breaking of the legs, by a *death beyond all exceptions rapid*, to the *secret councils of God*.' Lightfoot

also advances the doctrine that the death of Jesus was not the result of punishment, but a voluntary surrender of life. Bishop Taylor, also, claims that 'he laid down his life voluntarily.' Doctor Adam Clark, following in the same strain, says: 'He himself *willingly gave up* that life which it was *impossible for man to take away*.' Other grave authorities are quoted by Dr. Stroud, but their reproduction is deemed a work of supererogation. The Doctor himself continues to say: "From the concurrence of so many learned authors in ascribing the death of Jesus to supernatural agency, one advantage however results, namely, the acknowledgment thereby made, that in their opinion this solemn event cannot be satisfactorily explained by any other cause,—neither by the principal, nor by the accessory sufferings of crucifixion,—nor by any extraordinary degree of weakness, original or acquired,—nor by the wound inflicted by the soldier's spear, etc."

The learned and pious physician does not confine us to the opinions of theologians, but gives us the opinions of other learned physicians who, like himself, had given their attention to this subject. Sir James Y. Simpson, one of the ablest physicians of modern times, in a letter reproduced in Dr. Stroud's work, gives his views of the matter in the following terms: "His death was *not* the result of crucifixion; for, 1. The period was too short; a person in the prime of life, as Christ was, not dying from this mode of punishment in *six hours* as he did, but usually surviving till the *second or third day, or even longer*. 2. The attendant phenomena, at the time of actual death, were *different from those of crucifixion*.

The crucified died, as is well known, under a lingering process of gradual exhaustion, weakness and *faintness*. On the contrary, Christ cried with a loud voice and spoke once and again,—all apparently within a few minutes of his dissolution.

“II. No known injury, resion, or disease of the brain, lungs, or other vital organs could, I believe, account for such a sudden termination of his sufferings in death, except (1) arrestment of the action of the heart by *fatal fainting or Syncope*; or (2) rupture of the walls of the heart, or large vessels issuing from it.” This opinion, from such unquestionably high authority, would seem to be almost conclusive as to what Jesus could, or could not, have died from; *provided always*, that he *did actually die* at the time to which he alludes. Of course, this point the doctor dared not question; but, accepting as a fact that he was actually dead, he gives us the only two sources from which he thinks such a death could possibly have occurred; namely: fatal fainting and rupture of the heart or its immediate connections. That is to say, that, if Jesus did die at all, we are reduced to two possible causes for that death, namely: heart-rupture, which is a result not at all peculiar to this mode of punishment, and is also exclusively the result of exertions or emotions which in fact did not exist in this case; and secondly, to *fainting*, which is an ordinary and natural result of crucifixion, which *may be*, but rarely *is*, fatal. When we reach the proper stage of our examinations, we will remember these two sole possibilities, and take occasion to compare their probabilities in this case, and shall also endeavor to show, not only that the overwhelming pre-

sumption is in favor of fainting, but that there is an equally potent presumption that the fainting was *not fatal*. Sir James' objections to fainting neither apply, nor were intended to apply, to fainting which is not fatal. A number of physicians agree upon the main point, namely : that he did not die from the sufferings of crucifixion ; but they differ both as to the time and mode of his death. The learned Grüners, father and son, among others, contend that he did not die from crucifixion, and, moreover, that he clearly was *not dead* when the soldier pierced him with his spear just before he was taken from the cross, but that he was in a faint and languid condition which allowed the heart to act feebly. In their opinion the spear was thrust into a *living man*, and that this thrust killed him, as they suppose he must have been killed *somehow*. So that we have this additional, but more direct support to the idea that Jesus merely *fainted* at the ninth hour. If, therefore, this spear thrust should be a mistake or an after-thought, or was of a kind not to produce death, or to produce such a death as must have occurred, if at all, from the actual manifestations,—that is, instant death without a struggle or a sigh, then we have the assurances of these high medical authorities for the fact that Jesus was delivered *alive* into the hands of his friend Joseph of Arimathea.

The idea that such a man as the evidence shows Jesus to have been, could have been actually killed

simply by being confined as he was, and sitting astride of a wooden shaft or projection, such as has been described, for the short time he was on the cross, is so thoroughly and plainly incredible, that no hypothesis or supposition has been left untried to account for his death in some other manner: none ever daring or even thinking to inquire, either then or since, whether he was dead at all! The causes of death suggested in lieu of the ordinary and gospel notion of death by crucifixion have been the following: 1. That he died by reason of extraordinary physical weakness. 2. That he did not die by reason of any physical weakness, but from the spear wound, at the very last moment. 3. That he did not die from either of these causes, but from rupture of the heart from excessive mental emotions—that the malediction of God, for man's sins, burst his heart open! 4. That he died from none of these causes, nor from *any physical* cause whatever, but from his own divine will or the special intervention of God.

The first thing which strikes us on reading these various hypotheses is, that they agree in but two things, namely: in utterly rejecting the Gospel notion of death by crucifixion, and in their successful demolishing of all other theories of death save their own.

The theory of extraordinary physical debility, from whatever cause, has not a scintilla of evidence to support it—is, in fact, in direct conflict with the entire body of the evidence, and had but one thing to recommend it, namely:—it was the first and simplest suggestion. If the actual punishment on the cross could have

effected only a very small part of the killing of a vigorous man thirty-three years of age, it was assumed that he must have been already so nearly dead that it only required that little to kill him. This was the only way of sustaining what the Scriptures said. We have seen, however, that the whole evidence is in favor of the conclusion that Jesus went upon the cross in the prime of his manhood, with a vigorous body, excellent health, was exceptionally favored, and in a calm and resolute spirit. We have seen, also, that it does not become Christians to make this excuse; since it is clear that Jesus as the antitype of the paschal lamb—the lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world, must have been a pattern man—"without spot or blemish." And the Gospels well bear out this idea of him. From the age of fourteen, we are told that he "grew and waxed strong in spirit;" and they furnish ample reasons for believing that he grew to a healthy and vigorous manhood, and that he fully maintained it till the very moment he mounted the cross with the self-possession of a Stoic. Jesus had, doubtlessly, a somewhat extraordinary physical, or rather nervous, organization, but it was a powerful one, and one endowed with large vitality and unfailing vigor. We have seen, too, that the whole bearing of Jesus through the entire scenes after his arrest, and in his loud cries even up to the last moment, give a direct contradiction to this suggestion of physical debility. The evidence does not leave the matter to doubt and conjecture. Not a single word or act of Jesus can be tortured into an evidence of either weakness or excessive prostration. Nor was he at any time of his public life more calm and self-possessed. The mere fact of his

fainting earlier than the two thieves who suffered with him, is accounted for by reasons already given, and gives no support to the idea of his physical debility. A woman might survive crucifixion as long as a man, and yet faint much oftener. It is not even necessary to add the further plain explanation that Jesus, having refused the "mercy cup" to deaden his sensibilities, became the more liable to faint under the unmitigated torture. *Fatal* fainting, indeed, was utterly at war with the facts; but fainting, indefinitely prolonged, was a natural and ordinary result of all such tortures, as well as specially probable with an organization such as that of Jesus. And again: it would be difficult to assume any state of prostration which would have allowed Jesus even to walk to Calvary; which would account for so unexampled a death as is alleged. A young man who was not prostrated beyond this point, would still be expected to certainly survive over twenty-four hours; while the time he actually suffered would have been insufficient to kill an infant or a valetudinarian. There are thousands of men in the United States now who would be glad to suffer that amount of punishment for a hundred dollars, and not a few of them who would suffer it for ten; and perhaps not one out of a hundred of them would even faint under the operation, any more than did the "two thieves," who were worse treated.

We may now approach the second hypothesis:—that he perished by the spear wound in his side. This theory

was also advanced because its advocates found it impossible to believe in death by so insignificant a punishment by crucifixion, or to perceive the slightest foundation for the suggestion of any extraordinary debility or prostration upon the part of Jesus. To them, the only loophole for escape seemed to be this spear thrust by the soldier at the time he was taken from the cross ; a cause which was never dreamed of by even the Evangelist who mentions it. This theory is rather the suggestion of a physician than a theologian, since, besides contradicting all other theories, it flatly contradicts the entire teaching of the New Testament ; all the Gospels declaring that his death had occurred before at about the ninth hour. This objection is fatal to it from a Christian or Gospel stand-point. But the evidence is equally fatal to it from a rational stand-point. At the time the alleged spear thrust was given, the prisoner seems to have given no responsive motion or sign of life whatever. And to kill a man, even when in a faint, by stabbing him, without his ever drawing a subsequent breath, making one gasp, or exhibiting one convulsion or contraction of the muscles, we deny to be possible. Such a death would be as instantaneous as that from a lightning stroke, and could only be partially approximated with a spear, and then only by a vigorous thrust through the very heart. And even in such a case there would be one or more convulsive spasms or gasps ensuing. But the advocates of this theory seem to have forgotten one matter which is absolutely fatal to it. Had Jesus received a heart-thrust so instantly fatal to life, it would have been impossible for him to *revive*, or to *live* after he *had* revived. That which had so instantly prevented him

from living, would have *continued to prevent* his living. For we have the identical authority for saying that Jesus reappeared in the exact condition in which he had been taken from the cross,—nail-wounds, spear-wound and all, as we have for saying that he was speared at all. There had been *no* miracle performed on his wounds while in the tomb, but they were still open and ready for the finger and hand of Thomas to be thrust into them. This objection is utterly fatal to both this, theory and that of heart-rupture.

But, even if we are to credit this spear thrust, there is neither assertion; nor evidence in the Gospels, that it was of a character to be injurious to life; but, on the contrary, the fair conclusion from the whole evidence is that it was an insignificant affair, so far as life was concerned, and was so regarded by John at the time. At the time the Centurion gave the command to break the limbs of the other sufferers, he had already personally reported the actual death of Jesus to Pilate. Knowing the almost impossibility of such a thing, Pilate pretended to be amazed at the result, and, to clear his own skirts, had demanded to have the report directly from the officer himself. The Centurion had then been ordered to deliver the body, at once, and as it was, to Joseph of Arimathea. From that moment the Centurion and his soldiers had but one power and one duty with regard to Jesus,—and that was, to immediately deliver it to Joseph. He would not have dared to have lacerated the body in that wanton manner or to have permitted it to be done. Such an act would not only have been a brutal one, even on a dead body, and especially in the sight

of his broken-hearted mother and sorrowing friends, but it would have been an unwarranted breach of duty, and an act in conflict with their whole spirit and conduct towards Jesus throughout this sad affair. It *could* not have been to *kill* him, for he was assumed to be already dead. That a private soldier should have dared to do such a thing in the presence of his officer and without his authority, either on the dead or living body, is simply incredible. It would have been exactly his life's-worth to have done it. And certainly such an act, under the circumstances, could not have passed without an indignant protest, at least, upon the part of Joseph, to whom the body then of right belonged. Dr. Stroud very justly remarks in this connection—"Besides, the soldiers were not at liberty thus to interfere with the execution at their pleasure, and had any of them presumed to do so, it would have been at the risk of their life."

If ever that spear wound was given at all, it was given by, or with the consent of the Centurion, and with the approbation or consent of Joseph of Arimathea; and was done to favor Jesus or his supporters. They all knew, as well as Pilate, that a death by crucifixion in so short a time was too "marvellous" not to be suspicious, and it is possible that, fearing after possibilities, they had agreed, when with Pilate or in returning, that some pretence of spearing him should be gone through with either for a claim that they had despatched him, or, more probably, as evidence that they had taken this precaution to assure themselves of his death. Such a course might have been of after

service to his friends, and certainly might and would have been executed in a manner that would prove beneficial to Jesus also. For a slight puncture in the side with a spear would have been a rude, but efficient substitute for the lancet of the doctor, and such a venesection would evidently tend to slowly re-start the circulation of the blood and revive the action of the heart. If the point of the spear reached the cavity of the body at all, it most probably entered the lower part of the plural cavity near the central part of the body. In profound and prolonged fainting, such as the friends of this theory contend for, such a puncture would evidently tend to restore, instead of destroy, vitality. The fact that this puncture was not intended to be injurious to life, if it was ever given, is made clear by several considerations. In the first place, if the Centurion was not conniving at the escape of Jesus, and actually believed him dead, he could not have thought of killing him a second time, and it would have been sheer wanton brutality to have mutilated the dead body, unless the officer thought it a matter of duty to go through all the routine of the punishment as impartially as he did with the other two sufferers; in which event, however, he would have broken his limbs as he did those of the others. But he did not consider it his duty to despatch Jesus, in any form, since that operation was only to hasten death, and he had officially announced the actual death of Jesus, and the body had been ordered to be given up to his friend; and whether he really believed, or did not believe, that he was dead, he was acting upon the positive assumption that he *was* dead, and therefore could have done nothing with a view either to

destroy or injure life or to mutilate the dead remains over which he had no further right. It is again manifest, also, that, as Jesus reappeared, and was with his disciples many times with this very spear thrust still open and unhealed, and could go about without inconvenience or complaint of suffering, the wound must have been, not only not mortal, but comparatively insignificant. It is very apparent, also, that the very object of the early application for the body of Jesus and the official report of the officer was to prevent his being treated like the other prisoners, and to thus prevent either his actual death or his mutilation after death. That this object, concurred in by the Centurion as well as Joseph, should have been directly frustrated, either with or without the consent of the Centurion, is quite unbelievable.

While, however, this whole matter of the spear thrust has all the flesh-marks of a fabrication, and the theory that Jesus was killed by it is utterly unscriptural and unsupported by the evidence, its learned advocates lend us their authority for concluding from the entire evidence, that Jesus was only in a fainting or swooning condition when he was given up for dead, and that he was still alive up to the time of this asserted spear wound. Now, if they are right in this conclusion, as they certainly are, we see that there is every reason to believe that he was still alive when carried away into secrecy, even if the spear puncture was actually made. In fact, if blood ever flowed "*forthwith*" out of that wound, as John says it did, then that fact, in itself, proves that he was *not* dead. For blood will not flow from a puncture in the flesh of a man who has been dead an hour or more,

unless some considerable vein or artery be opened by it ; and then, at most, there would only one or two drops *ooze slowly out* by mere force of gravity :—a fact of which John was evidently ignorant, for he claims that Jesus had been dead since the “ninth hour.” If John’s spear puncture proves anything, therefore, it proves that Jesus was still alive.

FOURTH HYPOTHESIS : Having examined all the possible *perceptible* causes for the incredible fact of the death of Jesus, we have still to meet another supposititious, *hidden* physical cause, namely : rupture of the heart from emotional causes. This fact is, not only occult in its nature, but also in its only decisive indicia or symptoms. That such cases sometimes occur is true, but it is equally true that they are of rare occurrence, and that, to the extent of their rarity, are they improbable and require the clearer proof—a proof, only possible by examining the heart itself.

The statements of Sir James Y. Simpson, in the letter already quoted, are worthy of the highest consideration on this point, however we may differ with him in his adaptation of the facts in this case to his professional rules. He declares that “no medical jurist would, in a court of law, venture to assert from mere symptoms preceding death, that a person had certainly died of rupture of the heart. To obtain positive proof, that rupture of the heart was the cause of death, a *post-mortem* examination of the chest would be necessary.” With this theory, then, we have to begin with a certainty of ending in an uncertainty. At best, it would be impossible for

us to have more than mere persuasive evidence of its probability. And, as it utterly denies and excludes all other possible causes of death on the cross, it would, at best, forever leave us in utterly irremediable uncertainty of a fact upon which they claim human salvation to be based ;—a state of things which it is impious to predicate of God.

It is contended by the advocates of this theory, that the external symptoms of heart-rupture were present in this case ; and, by the most bald and unscrupulous assumptions, they endeavor, not only to convert the recorded facts into such symptoms, but to get the benefit of a kind of *post-mortem* examination through means of the single alleged spear thrust. They have been driven to resort to this occult cause and this extreme course of assumption and distortion of facts because they *must* account for actual death in some way, and they have found all the other causes assigned to be wholly incredible. Dr. Stroud tells us that it is the only possible way of accounting for the death of Jesus. And, as we are satisfied that he was not dead at all, we are quite satisfied that so far as those other theories are concerned, he is, and must be, right.

Let us examine, then, what basis there has been found for this new suggestion. And first, as to whether the conditions, causes and symptoms attending heart-rupture were present in the case of Jesus. Dr. Stroud, the champion of this new theory, quotes Dr. Coapland for the causes of this rare phenomenon as follows :—
“Violent mental emotions, especially anger, fright, terror,

unexpected disappointments, distressing intelligence abruptly communicated, anxiety, etc., sudden and violent muscular efforts and laborious or prolonged physical exertions of any kind, particularly in strained conditions." These are their full selection of causes. And there certainly can be no motive for questioning them, for it may be unhesitatingly asserted, that not a single one of them existed in the case of Jesus as it is disclosed by the Gospels. Jesus had no "violent mental emotions," of any kind, on the cross; nor had he had since he left the garden of Gethsemane. His conduct, temper, and whole bearing from the time of his arrest had been continuously and unusually calm and stoical, and utterly devoid of even ordinary animation; exhibiting, at times, even sullenness and indifference. And this continued to be the case up to the very moment he went upon the cross. While on the cross his calmness and self-possession was uninterrupted up to the last few moments. There was no new, unexpected or unusual cause of excitement or emotion, nor the slightest chance of bodily strain or exertion, throughout the entire proceedings; nor did the sufferer, by word or act, indicate, for a single moment, the existence or presence of such. He had nerved himself to endure what he knew he had to endure, and sat in his constrained and painful position without a word or a murmur, save in response to others, and then only with admirable temper and calmness. There was, not only no such causes for any sudden or over strain of the heart, but the very reverse was true, and eminently true and manifest.

But there has been one preliminary which has been overlooked in this matter. Were any, or even several,

of the immediate causes of heart-rupture shown to be present in this case, it would be of no avail unless it were also shown that Jesus had a *defective* or *diseased* heart. For the causes assigned for heart-rupture, or rather the occasions of it, may, and do happen every day to "the million" without the slightest danger of heart break. The real source of heart-rupture is in the heart itself. Of this there is, and can be, no question. Where then shall we find the evidence that Jesus had either an imperfect or diseased heart? If it stood the strain in Gethsemane, when under emotion so violent as to send the blood out through every pore of his skin, was it likely to burst while he was calmly sitting on the cross?—for such mere bodily *pain* as he suffered is not one of the causes of heart-rupture, nor claimed to be. In answering the suggestion of the extraordinary debility of Jesus, Dr. Stroud protests against the supposition of any defect in this lamb of God or sin offering. But must he not show just such a defect or weakness in his very centre of life, to maintain his own theory?

As to the *symptoms* of heart-rupture, Sir James Y. Simpson quotes for authority Dr. Walshe, Professor of Medicine in University College, London,—as follows: "The hand is suddenly carried to the front of the chest, a piercing *shriek* is uttered, etc." These two are all the symptoms which he quotes, and, of course, he can rely upon only one of these, and, unfortunately for his cause, upon but that one of them which is the least character-

istic and indicative. The sudden raising of the hand to the region of the heart locates the cause of the shriek, and tends to limit and point out its otherwise *wholly indefinite* significance. Without this location, as indicated by the hand, such a shriek would no more indicate heart-rupture, than any other sudden and unexpected pang,—even that from a coal of fire, or from a wasp's sting. And yet, in this case, the hands were confined, and they are compelled to rely upon finding an indefinite "shriek" for their sole external symptom. They are therefore reduced to a single external symptom, and that a symptom which exists in heart-rupture in common with many other pangs. But, Why dwell on the total uncertainty of this symptom, especially when thus unlocated by the hand, when no such symptom actually occurred? There was no such "piercing shriek" as occurs in heart-rupture in this case. Such a shriek does not consist of a verbal exclamation, prayer, or appeal or other verbal outburst, but manifestly consists of an *inarticulate* shriek or sudden *cry*, from the anguish of a sudden and fierce pang. Webster defines the word, shriek, as signifying "A *sharp, shrill outcry* or *scream*, such as is produced by sudden terror or extreme anguish." When, therefore, we use the word, "shriek," and qualify it by the word, "piercing," and then use them to characterize the verbal exclamations of Jesus when he exclaimed "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me!" or "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," or "It is finished," we are certainly grossly misapplying language and misconceiving the nature of the outcry from heart-rupture. These verbal appeals and prayers of Jesus have nothing in common with the

involuntary and inarticulate shriek which is forced out by the sudden and unexpected pang of heart-rupture save that they both emanate from bodily suffering; and it is trespassing upon good nature to attempt to identify them. The exclamations and appeals of Jesus were not the result of a sudden and unexpected pang, but of *persistent and unendurable torture*. It was the exclamation and prayer for mercy which the child or slave makes when they can no longer bear their whipping, or the exclamation of the patient under the hand of the surgeon in a prolonged and overpowering surgical operation, or the cry to God of the martyr on the rack. It was nature's outcry for help, or of surrender, when it could no longer continue the conflict with suffering. It was the cry of "enough!" from whipped nerves and overmastered will. The victims of the Inquisition, whose hearts did *not* break, could tell us the full significance of every tone of that half-complaining, half-appealing, and wholly despairing cry of—"My God! my God! Why hast thou forsaken me!" Suffice it then to say, that even the "piercing shriek," indifferently attending heart-rupture and many other pangs, did not occur in the case of Jesus at all, but only the usual natural and repeated exclamations wrung from him, not by a sudden pang, but by *prolonged* and *overmastering* suffering, and that even this *sole* and *indecisive* symptom, therefore, was relied upon in defiance of the plain facts.

We have seen, then, that neither the predisposition or condition for heart-rupture, nor its occasions or

causes, nor its symptoms were presented in the case of Jesus. It remains, therefore, only to consider the value to be attached to the evidence furnished by what they have termed a "rough *post-mortem*"—that is, by a single spear puncture! Acute to observe the assumptions and perversions of others, none have been so recklessly prolific of them as Dr. Stroud himself. Matter doubtful, indifferent or unknown he at once assumes to be of the character which is most favorable to his own theory. Not only has he perverted the facts to secure some pretence for a symptom of heart-rupture, and assumed a hidden occasion or inducing cause for heart-rupture in this case, but he assumes and moulds the facts *ad libitum*, to secure material from the spear wound to establish that flimsy hypothesis; forgetting that, as a hidden, rare, and wholly ungospel assumption, it, of all others, requires the clearest *affirmative proof*. There are a whole series of facts, each one of which constitutes a *necessary link* in the chain of facts from which he attempts to construct an argument in favor of his proposition, and each one of which he gratuitously assumes to have existed in a form favorable to his purposes. It is, of course, necessary to his very first step, that the spear thrust should have been actually given;—a fact which is more than questionable. Secondly, it is necessary that the thrust should have been made from below and with a specific angle of elevation, and that it should have penetrated the body at a specific point; since he contends that the spear reached the heart and detached the clotted blood around it or within the cordiac sac, and that this red clot or crassamentum and the serum expressed from it constituted the blood and water which

run down and exuded from the side. Thirdly, it was necessary that the thrust should have been on the *left side*. Fourthly, that the thrust should have been vigorous enough to have penetrated to the heart. Fifthly, that the blood and water were separate, or unmixed. Sixthly, that the blood and water were not blood and water, but crassamentum and serum. If even one of these facts should fail to be true, the whole argument falls into ruins. And yet each and every one of them are sheer assumptions, without even a hint in the evidence to support them. To secure even a single reason in favor of the theory, every one of these facts must be true,—to commence with; and yet, they are not only generally discredited by the evidence, but there is not one of them which is not as likely to be false as true, and the opposite of which might not have been assumed with equal plausibility. What evidence, for example, have we as to the precise direction and point of entrance of the spear? What proof have we that the wound was on the left, instead of right side? Not a particle. And yet, if it were not on that side, the whole argument fails. If the right side had been more favorable, it would have been as boldly assumed and with exactly the same plausibility. What evidence have we that the soldier thrust him to the heart? There is not a word of direct proof either way, and we have seen how completely the circumstances lead to a different conclusion as to the character of the thrust, if it were ever given. And it is, moreover, clear that to have given the precise thrust required, must have been a mere accident, since it would have required the exact knowledge of an anatomist and the skill of a Spanish taxidor to have made it designedly.

And again, What proof have we that the "blood and water" was red clot and serum? By what right does he assume that they were something different from what the only evidence on the subject *says* they were? There is no impossibility in the evidence, as it stands, to justify or excuse such a perversion; but, on the contrary, a far more possible and probable explanation can be found for it than that furnished for this assumed substitute for it.

Besides these unjustifiable assumptions, there are other considerations which are wholly destructive of the claims based upon this *post-mortem* evidence. They contend that the heart of Jesus had been ruptured at the ninth hour; that the blood at once flowed out, after the thrust or puncture, and had been separated into red clot and serum before the spear thrust was given; and that upon being punctured with the spear, these separated elements of the blood run out through the aperture made by the spear. Granting all the unjustifiable assumptions upon which these premises are based, and accepting them as they are assumed, we deny the possibility, much more the probability or certainty, of the results claimed; for the following, among other reasons. When blood coagulates, the red particles *invariably adhere* to some adjacent surface, in a gelatinous and *cohesive mass*. In most cases of rupture of the heart the red clot forms around the external walls of the heart itself, and adheres to them like a gelatinous coating or partial envelope; while the serum of the blood,

when expressed from the mass, settles in a liquid form into the surrounding cardiac sac. Sometimes, again, this coagulated and cohering mass of red clot adheres to, and coats, the inner walls of the cardiac sac. We contend, in the first place, that, under either of these conditions, the sharp-pointed spear of the soldier would not have so ruptured and broken up this cohesive and adhering mass of jelly as to have detached it from the walls of the heart or those of its enclosing sac, and caused it to have fallen or slid out of the slit made in the cardiac sac. The result of the penetration of the sharp point of a spear into such a dead mass, so conditioned, would have been, that this cohesive and elastic matter would have parted and yielded before the smooth point of the metallic blade of the spear, and then simply *reclosed* when that sharp point was withdrawn. In such case there would be no detachment or separation of clots or small masses from the general mass ; nor would the slit remain open ; nor would there be any tendency to disunite the red clot either from the heart to which it hung or from the sac on which it rested and to which it adhered ; but simply a *gradual lateral yielding* as the progressively enlarging point entered, and a recovery of its former position, and thus a reclosing of the slight slit when the lance was withdrawn. If, however, we concede for the moment, that such a mass would be broken up and detached by such a cause, and that it would escape through the slit in the cardiac sac, Would these blood clots or masses find their way out through the slit in the side of the outer wall of the body? We contend that it was impossible ! The heart is located in the thoracic cavity, slightly to the left of the central line of the breast

bone, with its lower and conical point resting about an inch and a half inside, or to the right of the left nipple. It nowhere *touches* the side-walls of the chest. Between it and the ribs on the left side, where the puncture is supposed to have been made, the left lobe of the lungs intervenes and separates them, and covers, not only the entire left side of the heart, but extends some distance below it ;—thus forming a complete barrier between the heart and the adjacent walls of the body and for some distance below. With an elevation of the spear point only from one and a half to two feet (or even three feet), above the level of the hand, as would be the case in this instance, it would seem impossible for it to reach the heart without passing through this intervening lobe of the lungs ; and if so, it is clear that the spongy and elastic substance of the lung would so immediately reclose the aperture made by the lance point as to render it impossible for the clotted blood to pass out through it, even if it would tend at all to do so. But, even were the wall of the body punctured below the lung (and much more above or opposite it), still the clotted blood would not issue from any wound which would be made by a spear wound in the walls of the body. In the first place, such an incision in a body so recently dead would reclose sufficiently to prevent clots of blood from passing. And secondly, there would be no force or tendency to drive them in that direction. For it will be remembered, that the body was in an upright position, and assumed to have been *dead*. There would be no power from the heart or circulation, and no force operating but the force of gravity ; and that would cause both the clot and serum to fall directly downwards through the thor-

acic cavity, subject only to such deflections as obstructing objects might give it. Unless some such deflection occurred they would both settle into the bottom of the thoracic cavity. But there was nothing to cause such deflection. The matter issuing from the cardiac sac would fall directly downwards, near the centre of the body, without any lateral tendency, and would never reach the puncture in the wall of the left side at all. But even if it were to reach it, it would slide down the smooth inner side of the wall until it reached the bottom of the cavity, and the slit made by the spear in that wall would not obstruct it, and would certainly have no tendency to deflect its downward course into its own small and almost lateral channel, if, indeed, that aperture were not so closed as to prevent its passage. So that, by the very position, condition, nature and construction of the body and by the law of gravity, it was impossible for the matter issuing from the cardiac sac to naturally run out at that lateral wound.

It is important, also, to note the peculiar phraseology of the description of this issuing of the blood and water. It will be observed that the witness uses the strongest possible word to express their instantaneous outflow—when the spear was withdrawn. He declares that they came out “forthwith.” Now, were it possible to suppose that the clotted blood within the cardiac sac could be broken up and detached by the penetration of a spear point, and could we suppose it issuing from the slit in that sac and passing downwards until it reached the slit in the wall of the body and then passing nearly laterally out of that slit, still, all experience shows that the

operation would take such a time as could not be reasonably described by the term "forthwith." Persons who are familiar with the movements of clotted blood in slaughtered animals, and especially through slits or apertures made by sharp-pointed instruments, are aware of the sluggish nature of its movements and of the great difficulty of getting it to run out all, unless a direct downward and quite open passage is furnished for it, and its exit is aided by successive joltings to start its movements. Persons having had such experiences will find themselves incapable of believing that the clotted blood could fall or slide out, without help, in this case, in a manner to elicit a declaration that it appeared "forthwith," even were it possible for it to run out at all.

There is still another and *wholly fatal* objection to this theory. It assumes a wound, both by the rupture of the heart and the thrust of the spear, which would necessarily be fatal to the living person. And yet, Jesus, as we have seen, reappeared in apparent comfort, except being hungry, just in the bodily condition he was in when taken from the cross,—spear wound and all, save that he had revived. And certainly the same rupture of the heart and spear thrust to the heart which would have killed him, would have prevented him from living, and uncomplainingly walking about the country and eating, just as when in health. It is impossible to escape this objection even by the supposition of a miracle; for the same author who gives us the spear thrust, upon which they are compelled to depend, also assures us that Jesus reappeared with his wounds just as they had been given.

We may now turn our attention to the supernatural theory. Having failed to find a credible natural cause or mode of death for Jesus, the shrewder theologians of both ancient and modern times, turned to their never-failing mode of accounting for the irrationalities and absurdities of their faith. When reason and common sense revolted, they never thought a moment of questioning their creed. Their faith never wavered. *That* was "anchored within the vale." It was irrational and absurd to say that Jesus died from natural causes. Such a conclusion was utterly irreconcilable with the facts. What was left, then, but to go outside of the realm of Nature and Reason for a cause? Was there anything left to men who had never dreamed of doubting the death itself, but to say, that he voluntarily extinguished his life by an act of his own will as one of the Trinity, or that another member of that Trinity had extinguished it for him, in defiance of Nature and her laws? To this final make-shift, as we have seen, the wisest and best of them have been driven. To a blind faith this seemed to offer at least a hope of mental repose and a certain kind of security from discomfiture, however unenviable. But however difficult it may be to positively prove that a death did *not* occur by divine interference, it is by no means so difficult to prove that the man did not die at all, since the fact of death is positively rebutted by the fact of subsequent life.

Let us, however, briefly consider what pretence can

be set up for asserting a miraculous death by divine volition in this case. From the time that he was arrested until he was taken from the cross the Gospels give no hint of either supernatural power being exercised in behalf of Jesus, in any form, or of an attempt to exercise such power by Jesus himself. Angels ceased their visits after the hand of the Law was laid upon him, the last of them having barely escaped the clutches of its minions. They, as usual, exhibited their coyness in daylight, and in the presence of the intelligent officials. Jesus admitted that the hour for the triumph of the powers of darkness had come. He was invited to exhibit his power, but declined the invitation. On the cross he was taunted with his professions of supernatural power, and defied to show it ; and yet he remained dumb. His very last appeal was a confession that God had *forsaken* him. All the facts which occurred after Jesus came under the inspection and control of the Jewish and Roman officials, lost not only all pretence of coming from supernatural interference, but were so nakedly human and natural that even his miracle-loving followers were deterred from claiming such interpositions. All the facts concerning Jesus during this period find ready and legitimate explanations in natural causes. Nor do the Gospels resort to any other sources of explanation, or give the slightest encouragement for others to do so. For everything which occurred to Jesus, they give or furnish a natural cause. This theory of death by divine interposition is, indeed, not only without support from the evidence, and therefore wholly gratuitous, but it is maintained in the very teeth of the doctrines and declarations of the Evangelists and Apos-

tles. If God or Jesus arrested, or, as they say, "prevented," the punishment of crucifixion, and released his soul to prevent further suffering and death by that means, then Jesus might have been a lamb slain *before* the foundation of the world, but he certainly was not *slain* afterwards. If he was required to be slain as an offering in discharge of man's indebtedness to God for the penalties of broken laws, then such a payment was a sham one—was voluntarily suspended, almost as soon as commenced, by either the assumed payor or by the divine Creditor himself. If the sacrifice was *necessary* to pay the debt, then the debt was *not paid*, if this theory be true. The Evangelists and Apostles were, at least, not so illogical as to sanction such an illogical conclusion as this; and *did* not. The conception is adverse to their whole notions of the atonement and their declarations concerning the mode of it. Their views and declarations in regard to both are unequivocal and incapable of rational misinterpretation. The Gospels all declare that he "gave up the ghost," but this was but an ordinary mode of saying that he died. Elsewhere in the New Testament we are shown exactly what they meant. Paul says, "He became obedient unto death, even the *death of the cross*." St. Stephen, in his defence before the Sanhedrim, charges the Jews with having been the betrayers and "murderers" of Jesus, which they could not have been, if he were not murdered, but was exempted from their murderous attempts by a special divine interposition. Peter replies to them in language still more specific on this point. He says to them—"The God of our fathers raised from the dead Jesus whom *ye slew by crucifixion*." On the day of Pentecost

he also speaks of Jesus as one whom they "took and by the *hands of wicked men crucified and slew.*" These as well as many other declarations and the whole tenor of their doctrines and teachings are conclusive as to the fact that they believed and held that Jesus died from the sufferings of crucifixion, and that his death was a natural murder at the hands of men. As this theory, therefore, can neither draw support from natural laws, causes or reasons, all of which it expressly transcends and defies, nor from its sole possible support, namely : the declarations of the men upon whose supposed inspiration their entire faith rests, it stands without support of any kind—a mere gratuitous assumption, seized upon as a *dernier resort* when all conceivable natural and rational modes of accounting for the fact that Jesus actually died on the cross had been tried and discarded as incredible. The very necessity of being driven to such a resort, to account for the fact of the death of Jesus, in the very teeth of the scriptures, and in defiance of natural law and reason, is overwhelming evidence that the fact itself did not exist,—where they had all the facts specifically narrated which tended to establish the fact of death, fully before them. The very fact of its assumption under such circumstances is a fatal admission.

We cannot fail to perceive, then, that the entire range of conjecture has been traversed for some plausible or even possible mode of accounting for the fact that Jesus died on the cross. The Apostles tell us that he died from crucifixion, which all the others agree to have been quite impossible. Others contend that natural or acquired weakness hastened his death. Others, that

the spear thrust finished him. Others, that the malediction of God for man's sins was too strong for him and burst his heart open. Others, that God came to the rescue. Others, that he concluded he had suffered enough, and voluntarily dismissed his own spirit. Others, that—But What other possible supposition is left? If we have come to the end, Is it not because the region of supposed possibilities has been fully explored? Seeing these exhaustive and utterly fruitless attempts of the brightest intellects of the Christian World, through nineteen centuries, to find a cause for the death of Jesus in the events which occurred on Calvary, with a full and detailed account of those occurrences before them, Is it not quite time we should begin to inquire whether the man really *did* die—whether this effect without a cause really existed?—something which was the first thing to have been inquired into and determined, but which was in fact never even questioned then, nor *dared* to be questioned since? Nay, more, if exhaustive effort fails to find in the facts any adequate cause of death, Is not the presumption almost, if not quite resistless, that he did *not* die? For he certainly could not have died without an adequate cause. And, unless the occurrences after he was taken from the cross show that he actually had died, the presumption against death would be complete. Even if he had been buried immediately after he was taken from the cross, the circumstances would justify a violent presumption of his having been buried alive.

It is a matter of significance, also, that such a host of the champions of the infallibility of the Apostles

should have been driven to disregard their plainly expressed doctrines on this fundamental matter. However widely they may differ as to the substitutes they offer, there is one thing upon which they have been compelled to unite, namely : that the Apostles erred in supposing that Jesus died from the punishment of crucifixion. That, at least, was deemed too contrary to all reason and human experience to attempt to sustain it. Nor are they less fortunate in demolishing the various theories propounded by each other as substitutes for that of the Apostles. Their theories are mutually exclusive and thoroughly destructive of each other. Each repudiates, as wholly untenable, every theory but his own ; so that, upon authority, each theory stands supported in the ratio of one to all, and stands refuted or discredited in the ratio of all to one. And really there is not a shadow of doubt, that the opposition majority have, in every instance, as great a triumph in reason as in numbers. Their success in demolishing the theories of each other is only equalled by their impotent zeal in maintaining their own. They not only clear the ground from the obstructions of all other theories, but severally furnish their quota of facts and arguments for the establishment of our own theory. The Apostles are our authority for saying that, if Jesus died on Calvary, he did not die from either supernatural causes or any of the natural causes which have been assigned, save that of crucifixion. The whole phalanx of distinguished authors and fathers of the church whom we have named, are our authority for saying that he did not die by the pains of crucifixion. Those who contend that he died by the spear wound sustain us in saying that up to his

last moments on the cross he was in a faint, but vital condition; while the suggestion that he died by the spear wound was never thought of by the Apostles, and is stoutly denied by all the supporters of other theories. Thus we have ample authority and proofs furnished by the defenders of his death, to prove that he did not die at all, but went into the hands of Joseph of Arimathea alive. Let us not content ourselves, however, without a summary review of the evidence in the case, preceding his reappearance, from our own stand-point of *continued life*.

CHAPTER XIX.

THEORY OF CONTINUED LIFE.

HAVING contested the theory of death, let us examine that of life. The theory of continued life, in this case, has nothing to prove. Such presumption of death as would arise from the bare fact of a capital judgment and pretended execution, ceases to be operative where the very facts of the execution are known and under discussion. That presumption also arises only by reason of the supposition that the executive officers would be disposed to faithfully execute the sentence. Any such inference is excluded here by the plain fact that the executive officer was violently opposed to the sentence, and, under the circumstances, must have regarded it his true duty to evade, rather than fatally execute it. Besides all this, the amount of punishment was, not only by Christian authority and fact, but by the confession of the chief executive officer himself, admitted and shown to be presumptive of continued life and not death. For Pilate regarded death under such circumstances as a "marvellous" matter, and therefore a very *unpresumable* one. But, as this presumption does not arise, and, if it did, is at once set aside, we must necessarily revert to the original presumption that, having been in full life and

vigor, he continued in life, and would so continue, until his actual death were proved, or a cause were shown which would necessarily result in death.

Besides this antecedent presumption of continued life, there is another retroactive presumption of continued life which is *absolutely irrebuttable and conclusive*. The man was alive and vigorous when he went upon the cross. There is nothing to rebut or overthrow the presumption that he entered the sepulchre alive that evening, without resorting to the powerful array of affirmative evidence in support of that conclusion. But then comes the overwhelming and resistless fact that he was actually in full life on the second morning afterwards. Is not this fact, *in itself*, conclusive proof that the man had *not* been dead, even if the evidences of death had been a thousand-fold stronger than they are claimed to have been? Dare we admit appearances of any kind or the opinions of any number of men to prove that a man who is in full life to-day, was absolutely dead yesterday? Or, that a man who is actually dead can, *while dead*, exert a power over his own dead and extinguished life, in contravention of the fundamental nature and laws of human life? When it is asserted on the one hand that a man died, and on the other hand that he was living afterwards, the issue is direct and the contradiction complete. Both cannot be true. Where the fact of the subsequent living is not clearly asserted on the trial of such an issue, then it is competent for us to still consider the evidences of death by way of impugning the credibility of the testimony in favor of the fact of subsequent life. But when it is proved beyond doubt, that the man was

actually alive subsequently to his alleged death, then all proof of real death becomes impossible, and all evidences of apparent death, however backed by opinions or authority, become useless. In the absence, then, of all evidences favorable to a continuance of life and of all other proofs of the weakness or insufficiency of the evidences of the fact of death, it is precisely as certain that Jesus did *not die* on the cross as it is that he was seen *alive afterwards*. The latter fact irrebuttably implies the former. And just to the extent that we make it certain that he was alive afterwards, do we enhance the certainty that he was not dead before. To prove, therefore, that he was not dead, it is only necessary to prove that he was alive afterwards. This proof the simplest Christian alive would consider ample to hang even his own brother were his guilt dependent upon it. Nor would any rational being ever even *question* the survival and continued life of any other man who ever lived, with positive proof of only this single fact of his being actually alive after his supposed death.

Why should we then hesitate to affirm and believe in this case, as we should in every other case, that this single fact of after-life, alone, is conclusive proof that the supposition that Jesus had died previously was a mistake? Certainly there can be no cause to make even a Christian hesitate, save such as have arisen out of a belief in his divinity. Thoroughly divest any rational Christian of that notion and the notions dependent on it, and he would not hesitate a moment in his conclusion upon such evidence. But, Have they any logical right to make this assumption in favor of this fact while testing

the very existence of the fact of his divinity itself? Are they not assuming his divinity to establish or defend the very fact upon which his divinity depends? If Jesus was not dead, then he did not arise from the dead; and, as Paul said, all their preaching "is vain." Nothing is more certain than that the belief in his divinity arose from, and was dependent upon, the supposed fact of his resurrection; which, in its turn, was dependent upon the fact of his having been actually dead. The supposed miracles which he had worked may have operated on his disciples as evidence of his being the Messiah, and, subsequently, as confirmation of his divinity, but the belief in his divinity neither could, nor did, arise out of those performances. For the power to work miracles was not regarded as any evidence of a divine nature, or even of a good one. Nor was it ever supposed that the Jewish Messiah was to be God. Nor is there the slightest doubt of the fact that the Apostles did not entertain the slightest idea that Jesus was God, incarnate or otherwise, until after his resurrection, and then only by reason of that very fact,—as we have already seen, and shall still further see as we advance. They themselves declare to Jesus himself that they had regarded him only as a "prophet," and that, until he was arrested and crucified, they had "hoped" that it was he that should have redeemed Israel—that is, they had hoped that Jesus was to be the temporal Messiah until his death had put an end to their hopes. It is clear, therefore, that in allowing the divine or supernatural pretensions of Jesus to make us assume his otherwise improbable and, indeed, disproved death, we are reasoning in a vicious circle—assuming a man to be a God, for the

purpose of proving the essential facts which originated and supported his pretensions to be a God. Even the obtusest mind must perceive that such a mode of reasoning is fatal to truth, even if we had not already shown the utter hollowness of his pretensions to even miraculous power, and much more to divinity. Are rational men prepared to thus irrationally blind themselves to the truth for the mere sake of the gratifications furnished by the delusion? If we are not, How stands our affirmation of the continued life of Jesus on the cross and in the sepulchre? Does it not stand proved, from the very beginning, by evidence which is exactly as conclusive as the evidence of the supposed resurrection or the fact that he was afterwards alive,—nay, more, upon the identical evidence? And as that evidence has been regarded ample for the support of so incredible a fact as the resurrection, may it not, *a fortiori*, prove the natural, and by no means wonderful, fact of his natural survival, which avoids the necessity of either discrediting the witnesses or of conceding so impossible a fact as self-resurrection from actual death? Can we be mistaken in saying that, were not this old mistake so fossilized by time, so hallowed by education, so venerated by use and association, so endeared by the hopes of its believers, and so guarded by the terrors of the cerberus of Superstition, it would melt away before this single proof like frost before the sun? Ignorance accepted the assumption of the impossible fact : the assumed fact apotheosized Jesus : and now the apotheosis and the terrors of hell guard the impossible fact ! The world is full of such errors, thus sanctified and guarded. Future and disenthralled generations will look back upon them with

the amazed pity with which we now look back upon astrology, alchemy, witchcraft, lycanthropy and devil-possession.

Not suffering ourselves, however, to rest upon this resistless proof, we have taken the pains to review the entire transaction, and to show that the entire evidence preceding and accompanying the crucifixion, not only conforms to, and confirms the fact which this resistless proof establishes, but, of itself, presumptively proves the same fact, as clearly as it *could* be proved in the absence of this last and conclusive fact. And when we shall have digested these proofs from our own stand-point, we shall further show that all the subsequent facts, over and above the mere fact of his reappearance, point even more directly and conclusively to our conclusion, than even those we have already considered.

Webster defines death as that state "in which there is a total cessation of all the vital functions, when the organs have not only ceased to act, but have *lost the susceptibility of renewed action.*" That is to say, that the peculiar and essential characteristic of death is not merely the suspension or cessation of the vital functions from temporary paralysis or derangement of the physical organism or any defect in the supply of the vital forces or conditions, but is that state of things that renders it impossible to restore vital action by natural means. To be dead, a man must be in a condition in-

compatible with life, and one which no natural conditions or agencies can restore or remedy. No fact is more difficult to verify than that of death. Even now, in this nineteenth century, there is a standing reward offered for the discovery of an infallible test. Life is only manifested to the observer by its sensuous manifestations, and when these cease or *become imperceptible*, there is *apparent death*;—a state which may be, or may *not* be, real death. The decision of this fact often defies the skill, even of experts, for a considerable time. Various vital conditions so completely resemble that of death, that physicians alone are capable of distinguishing them. Even they sometimes fail or err; while the ordinary observer is quite incompetent to give any reliable decision upon the question. Such cases are constantly coming to the notice of the public. Such states of assimilated or apparent death not only result from natural causes unaided by man, but are capable of being produced by bodily conditions resulting from drugs or inflictions administered by man. The East has immemorially produced drugs with this powerful and peculiar property. No cause is more prolific of such results than various forms of bodily torture. As we have seen, it is an ordinary and natural result of prolonged torture such as results from crucifixion. It is known, also, that such results are more likely to occur to such highly nervous organizations as that of Jesus, and to occur in more singular, striking and prolonged modes. We know, also, that, although no definite limit can be assigned to the duration of such states of apparent death, it is by no means singular that an organization such as that of Jesus, after swooning from the effects of

continued torture, should remain in that state of insensibility for several hours—should remain, in fact, for a much longer time than Jesus remained on the cross after the ninth hour. It is apparent, also, that drugs might not only have been administered to Jesus which would, of themselves, have subdued the vital action and produced a semblance of death, but they might have been given when the sufferer was on the point of swooning, with the view, and with the effect, of aiding the state of insensibility produced by the anticipated swooning, and thus assure the continuance of the state of insensibility. In attempting to show, then, that Jesus continued in life when he was reported to be dead, or even when he was actually supposed to be dead, we are attempting to show no improbable or incredible fact, but one which has often proved true under evidences of death immeasurably more cogent and reliable than they were in this case. We affirm, therefore, that the state of Jesus on the cross after the ninth hour,—which no mortal has been able to even plausibly explain and account for as that of death, and which was afterwards positively shown to be not that of death,—was, in truth, but a *prolonged swoon* induced by the torture of his punishment, and perhaps aided by drugs supplied in the so-called drink of vinegar. But this latter suggestion, we beg leave to say, was neither originated by our fancy, nor urged by its necessity to our view of the case ; since it is by no means important to our conclusions. It would not have been mentioned, indeed, had we not desired to present the case as it is made probable from the evidence. That evidence, we think, points, with sufficient certainty for notice, to the fact that some preparation was made

especially for his benefit, and was actually administered at the critical moment with a view to his ultimate preservation.

It is very clear, that the entire evidence from the arrest of Jesus until his delivery to Joseph of Arimathea, when taken from the cross, has been shown to be very incompatible with the supposition of his actual death on the cross; and it is equally clear that it furnishes most potent and cumulative evidences that Jesus would and did survive his punishment. And the general tenor of the facts show, that this result was both designed and aided by those who held control over him and his punishment. We have seen from the evidence, that there were many and powerful motives for saving the life of Jesus, on the part of the Roman officials who had control over his person and destiny, and that equal, if not identical motives urged the assistance and co-operation of secret friends or coadjutors of Jesus among the official and wealthy Jews. We have seen, that these friends within the circles of Jewish and Roman power had kept him advised of the movements against him, and had evidently notified him of his intended betrayal. We find striking evidences of their having communicated with him in Gethsemane. We find them making exhaustive efforts to save him on his trial. And after Pilate was humiliatingly driven to consent to his condemnation, while still solemnly and publicly denouncing the iniquity of his own coerced sentence, and publicly

washing his hands of the injustice of it, we find his friends, both Jewish and Roman, still following him up with many evidences of the same persistent and predetermined purpose to do their utmost to serve and save him after the sentence, which they had exhibited on his trial. We have seen, that they could not but regard it as a solemn duty to save him if possible. We have seen, that they had the entire control of his person and destiny from first to last; and that their power to save him was equal to their inclination,—subject only to a single fear; and that, although this fear had compelled his sentence to the cross, and compelled them to act with sufficient secrecy to prevent proof of their complicity in his escape, still this fact neither lessened their duty, their zeal, nor their power to save him from actual death, but only spurred them to more determined efforts.

We have seen, also, that circumstances marvellously aided them; that it was next to impossible for him to expire on the cross before the time he would be required to be despatched on account of the approaching sabbath, and that, if they could but avoid this necessity of despatching him by a reported and seeming death, and by then getting him out of sight of the public finally, their end would be accomplished. To this end we have seen every act of those who controlled or were concerned in the proceedings unmistakably *tended*, from first to last, as far as was consistent with the necessary forms of his punishment, whether they were intended so to operate or not. We have seen extraordinary pains taken to keep him free from over prostration before his punishment, and that he himself co-operated in this apparent

pre-arrangement and purpose by refusing to drink the "mercy cup," by which he would at once keep his mind clear to act his part, and render himself liable to swoon far earlier than were he to deaden his sensibilities by that soporific drink. This refusal of relief from suffering, and courting anguish, by one who had so often exhibited his dread of danger and his fearful dread of suffering and death, was especially remarkable, and can find no rational and consistent explanation save in connection with his own ultimate preservation. We have seen, also, a further and very striking evidence of some unusual design and of the concurrence of Jesus in that design, in the fact that they had had prepared and ready for use some unusual drink for the especial benefit of Jesus, and were ready with all the facilities for administering it, to give it to him the instant he gave the warning call, and actually "*run*" to him with it. The fact that all this should have been pre-arranged and provided for, that Jesus should so evidently have understood it and called for it, while having no legal right to expect such a favor, and the extreme promptitude with which it was served, are as significant as they were unusual. What did that drink consist of? For what purpose, and by whose authority, was it prepared and administered? These were secrets which few could know and which have long since perished. They can only be inferentially judged of now. That they were prepared with a view to serve Jesus is beyond reasonable question. How they were to serve him can only be inferred from the general purpose and end indicated by the whole evidence and by the apparent results or effects of the drink itself. If it had been vinegar or any drink which would

have relieved the thirst of which Jesus complained, it would have operated to refresh and revive him. Instead of doing this, however, Jesus said, directly after drinking it—"It is finished" or *accomplished*; and very soon dropped into that state of insensibility in which he continued while on the cross, and which served as the basis of the announcement that he was dead. The effects which followed, therefore, were indicative of anything but a *reviving* drink. To the very reverse of this, the whole facts about the providing and administering this drink and the effects which followed it, are certainly indicative of its having been given to produce the condition which followed, or to aid in producing or in prolonging and assuring it, and not at all with a view to revive him.

The state of insensibility of Jesus may have been produced by artificial means, and the strong determination to save him evinced by those concerned in his punishment and the fact, time, and mode of administering this prepared drink, together with the speedy effects which ensued, will warrant the conclusion that those results were produced by that prepared drink, in the absence of stronger evidence that a similar state of insensibility was produced chiefly by his condition and suffering, aided, prolonged and assured, probably, by this artificial means. That he was not killed by the punishment is made morally certain by the facts that occurred, and is rendered absolutely certain by the fact that he was alive afterwards. The amount of punishment had been wholly inadequate to menace the life of any one who was not already at the point of death. For we have shown that it could not have lasted even two hours. Sir James Y.

Simpson, as we have seen, considered it *impossible* that he could have died from crucifixion, assuming it to have lasted *six hours* ; and that death, in a subject like Jesus, was not to be expected under two or three days. One of the wisest of the early Christian fathers declared that death in such a case within *three hours* was to be regarded as a "miracle." John Calvin, as we have seen, thought that it was only "*profane* persons" who could think that a death so "beyond all exception rapid" could have happened without divine intervention. The very truth is, that life was not at all endangered by the amount of suffering inflicted on Jesus by the cross. All the theories of death have been shown to be irrational and incredible make-shifts to account for an impossible fact. There is nothing left, then, but to regard Jesus as either having swooned at the ninth hour, or as having fallen into a state of insensibility from the drink which had been prepared for him. Without waiving the probability of the latter explanation, there is certainly sufficient probability of the former ; while, if he swooned from the torture, the administering of the drink may have been given for the purpose of aiding or assuring the desired end. The nature of Jesus was one which would evidently swoon or faint early under torture, and there were other reasons which tended to facilitate that result. While Jesus was unimpaired in physical vigor, he had undergone a severe strain on his nerves in Gethsemane. And, although his nervous system had returned to a state of repose and became subject to the Will during the subsequent proceedings, yet those proceedings were not calculated to encourage that repose. The fair inference is, that the naturally sensitive nervous organization of

Jesus was in a condition, when he went on the cross, to be irritated more readily than usual by torture. Not that his nerves were permanently weakened, but in a more irritable state. It was true, also, that Jesus had not slept during the preceding night, and it would seem that he had eaten nothing during that day. All these causes would tend to make him faint earlier under his torture. The fact, also, that he voluntarily refused the usual means for so deadening his sensibilities to suffering as to prevent its most overpowering results, directly tended to bring on early swooning;—so strongly, indeed, that it indicated a design to bring about that very result. It is clear, then, that the facts, as well as the manifested purpose and design, tended to bring about, not death, but a state of insensibility which resembled death under ordinary observation.

In this state of insensibility he remained, so far as we either are, or were likely to have been informed. For, of course, no fact indicating continued life would have been allowed to reach the ears of outsiders since it would have destroyed all pretence of a defence for refusing to despatch Jesus with the rest. When he had remained in this state about an hour and a half, the approach of the sabbath compelled them to stop the crucifixion and despatch the prisoners by violence. This they accordingly did in the case of each of the other prisoners, neither of whom had shown any signs of giving way. But here again we meet with a chain of facts

which, if it were needed, renders the evidence of the intention and effort to save Jesus conclusive, in connection with the other proofs. When he had swooned or became insensible, the Centurion assumed that he was dead, and, we are told, publicly declared to the superstitious multitude, in view of so miraculous a death, that Jesus must have indeed been the Son of God. The people then left, and the Roman guard and a few Galilean friends of Jesus—who stood “afar off,”) remained to witness what occurred afterwards,—and one other. It would seem clear from all the facts, that Joseph of Arimathea was still present during all, or the greater part of the proceedings. For he must have been there and consulted with the Centurion when they both started to go to Pilate and report the death of Jesus, and to have an order for his delivery to Joseph, and thus avoid the necessity of despatching him with the others. This acute and wealthy Jewish friend or coadjutor of Jesus seems to have continued to watch over and direct the results to the last, and to have acted in secret concert with his Roman friends. Joseph and the Centurion must have returned to the city to “report progress” to Pilate very soon after the people left. Joseph is said to have gone “boldly,”—that is, with confidence, to Pilate to request the delivery of Jesus into his hands. Why such boldness and confidence in making so unprecedented a request? And, Why the unprecedented success of that request, unless the two were acting in concert? Had there been no such concert of action between them and no intention to save Jesus, this effort would never have been made; or, if made, could never have been made with confidence,

or have proved successful. His body would have been claimed in such case, as in all other cases, after his full execution was completed; and the executioner would not have interfered in the matter. And Pilate would not have consented to waive the legal course on account of a pretended death which was so "marvellous" as he himself claimed this to have been. For no sufficient reason or motive could be assigned for such a course. Whether he were dead or alive the regular course could not injure him beyond what his sentence required. To break his limbs when dead, wantonly, would be a brutal act; but to break them in the due course of legal execution, even if he happened to be dead, could neither be wrong, nor cause *suffering* to Jesus. No:—there could have been but one adequate cause for this confident application and this wholly unusual delivery of the prisoner to his friend without despatching him in the usual form. That cause was not a belief that he was dead, but a knowledge that he was *alive*; and the object was to *keep* him alive, by neglecting to despatch him under the pretence that he was dead. It was to save himself from this violent presumption, that Pilate felt it necessary to shield himself by the official report of death from the Centurion. With this, as the best excuse to be had, he dared to venture the consequences. So astonishing did this conduct of the Roman officials, in refusing to despatch Jesus like the rest, appear to John Calvin, that he declares it an "*extraordinary operation of divine providence*," and says that "whosoever examines the whole series of the narrative will be *compelled* to ascribe the exemption of Christ from the breaking of the legs, by a death beyond all exception rapid, to the

secret councils of God." From his own stand-point Mr. Calvin reasoned correctly. \ Regarding the officers as intending, in good faith, to execute the sentence against Jesus, he could find every reason why they should have treated Jesus like the others, but could find no reason why they should have made this astounding exemption in his favor on account of an alleged death so beyond "all exception rapid." Finding this mysterious and unaccountable course, he could only conceive that it had occurred through the inscrutable intervention of God. There was, very manifestly, some secret work and "secret councils" at the bottom of all this, which did not appear to the public then, and which only inferentially appear from the Gospels now. Had Mr. Calvin changed his stand-point to that which is so clearly the true one from all the evidence—had he, instead of conceiving Jesus to have been dead, conceived him to have continued in life, and had he, instead of supposing that the Roman officials were bent on destroying the life of Jesus, supposed that they well knew that he had not really died, and were determined that he should not die, then he would have had no difficulty in discovering that they had the most palpable reason for not despatching him like the others, whom they really intended to kill ; nor would he have had to resort, for causes of this unprecedented favoritism, to the secret and incomprehensible councils of God ; but he would have found very comprehensible causes, operating very efficiently through the *secret councils of men*. Mystery and the mysterious special interferences of God with the actions and affairs of men always vanish before the light of the full facts and the real truth. Whenever a fact constituting a part

of an actual transaction is found to be utterly inexplicable or mysterious upon received notions or theories of the transaction,—when the apparent facts and the conduct of the actors are known,—then the accepted theories and notions should at once be suspected ; and it is right at these mysterious and inexplicable facts, that we should pause with the highest hope of a successful solution and of a true theory of the facts. By inquiring of ourselves what facts, conduct or motives *could* rationally account for these particular facts, the answers to these inquiries will most likely furnish or suggest an explanation which will embrace, and apply to, the whole facts. We find here, as we have found throughout these entire proceedings, that those facts which are singular, unaccountable, or mysterious on the received theories of the facts, and which those theories have left unexplained, or have been compelled to resort to “angel’s visits” or the “secret councils of God” to explain, with a view to patch out their defective theories and natural agencies, have found in our theory of the facts the natural and consistent appropriation and explanation which every true theory must furnish for every known and established fact. To sustain the existing notions about the arrest, trial, punishment, death and resurrection of Jesus, the facts in regard to them have been greatly misrepresented and perverted. This is the natural requirement and tendency of a false theory. If the theory will not conform to the facts, the facts must be warped into conformity with the theory. We have seen that, instead of requiring the facts to be warped to suit it, our theory has *required* them to be again *unwarped* ; and that to the extent that they have been so

recovered, to that same extent do they increase the supports of our theory. There is, indeed, no even highly probable fact, from the beginning to the end of this affair, which cannot be clearly and naturally accounted for upon our theory ; and no other theory can even approach so complete a solution. Our theory neither claims, nor acknowledges any mystery or supernatural agencies in any part of the transaction. Whatever mysteries have hovered about this affair, have been the results of ignorance or misapprehension of the true state of the facts and of the motives, purposes and conduct of the persons who really directed and controlled the course of events.

Before finally leaving the cross, we desire to add but a few words in relation to the puncture of the body of Jesus with a spear. The proof of that allegation is wholly insufficient. It is asserted but by a single writer. The three first Gospels mention no such fact,—an omission which can scarcely be accounted for if such a fact had existed. We have seen that there were doctrinal reasons for the insertion of this visible exhibition of the real flesh-and-blood nature of Jesus. We find that the fact is asserted in a controversial spirit, as if there were in the mind of the writer a great desire to produce belief of the fact, and also an expectation that it would meet with opposition and denial. The writer asserts the fact as usual, but, not satisfied with this, he adds, “ And he that saw it bare record, and his record is

true : and he knoweth that he saith true, *that ye might believe*. For these things were done, that the *Scripture should be fulfilled*, a bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him *whom they pierced*." No such mode of controversial assertion and reiteration is used anywhere else in the Gospels. It amounts to a confession that the fact was new to the Church, and would be discredited ; and openly confesses that one object in asserting it was to secure a *belief* in this *newly asserted* fact. The object of asserting it was two-fold, and the second object is exposed with the nakedest simplicity :—it was done to fulfil a scripture, about looking upon some one who had been *pierced*. We have seen how often these attempts to appropriate and fulfil scriptural types and phrases in the old Scriptures have been made in the Gospels, and how uniformly and without exception they have been shown to have been mere after-creations. Whenever we find a recital in the Gospels accompanied by the declaration that the matter recited occurred to fulfil a scripture, then, in the language of seamen, we may "look out for foul weather : " the sign never fails. We have seen, also, how utterly out of place such an act would have been, under the circumstances, and how contrary it would have been both to the duty and to the manifested inclinations of those who are asserted to have done it. We have seen, also, that it was in conflict with the assertion of the previous death of Jesus by that same Gospel. If Jesus had died at the ninth hour, and had been dead for an hour and a half in that cool weather, it is certain that blood would not flow from his side, "forthwith," upon being punctured with a lance.

The chances were a thousand fold that there would not, in such a case, have been even a "show of blood." The possibility was, that, if a vein of any size was severed near the surface of the body, a drop or two of blood might have sluggishly drained or oozed out by the force of gravity. Without rupturing such a vein no blood would have flowed. The writer evidently did not know or think of this fact when he asserted that blood flowed "forthwith" out of a fresh puncture made in the side of a body which he had declared to have been dead an hour and a half before, and which had remained quiescent in the cool, open air ever since. Had he perceived the force of the evidence which he thus furnished that the man was still alive and his blood still warm and still circulating (even if feebly), he would scarcely have ventured to have asserted this fact, even to "fulfil a scripture," or have been so anxious for fear of its being disbelieved. While, therefore, this fact may aid, and certainly does not weaken, our theory, we can but say, that we believe the whole matter to be a controversial and mythic after-thought. None of the other gospels even mention the fact that John was present at the crucifixion at all, although they all name a number of his disciples as being in the city. All the other apostles were in hiding. John alone claims to have been present. The others seem to have never known that fact, and it seems not to have entered into the traditions or beliefs of the church even in the time of Luke. Such facts could not have been thus unknown and unrecorded.

Further proofs of this fact of continued life will accumulate at every step of our advance.

CHAPTER XX.

THE REVIVAL.

THE accounts which we have of the occurrences between the time of the delivery of Jesus to his friend Joseph and his re-appearance to his followers are very meagre and unreliable,—necessarily so, indeed. For even the men who were the chief witnesses of former Gospel facts were then in hiding, and personally knew nothing of the occurrences themselves; but were compelled to rely upon after reports or rumors and on their own conjectures as to what actually occurred. Such evidence, of course, is entitled to little credit; and all the more so, that those chiefly concerned in those transactions were compelled to conceal the true facts, and were deeply interested in giving special direction and character to the current rumors and reports. Fortunately, this is of little consequence; since none who believe that Jesus entered that sepulchre alive and came out of it living, will ever suppose that he had died in the mean time in the sepulchre; while all the facts which are necessary to a correct conclusion are so plainly inferable from the precedent and subsequent facts and from the character, motives and situation of the actors, as to be beyond all rational doubt.

We are told that, when Joseph received Pilate's order for the possession of Jesus, he procured a linen cloth to wrap his naked person in ; and that he and Nicodemus took him, thus wrapped, to a new sepulchre, hewn out of the face of a rock, and which had never been used, belonging to Joseph himself. This sepulchre was "nigh at hand," and consisted of an excavation or small room in the rock large enough to permit several people, at a time, to enter it. A few minutes after Jesus was taken from the cross, he was within this secret and secure shelter. Here his friends could have unquestioned control, and could use what restorative means and processes they chose, without the possibility of outside observation. No place could possibly have been more fortunate in its location and character for the successful execution of the purposes and plans of those who conveyed him thither,—namely : his secret restoration and the preparations for his escape. That the place for his crucifixion should have been selected so near a sepulchre which was so singularly adapted to their purposes, and one belonging to the most active manager of the scheme, is, in itself, so singular as to suggest the idea of its having been selected after a conference between Joseph and Pilate, and with an express view to this very convenience.

The time was as fortunate and favorable as the place. Night and the sabbath were just at hand when he was taken there, and there were a dozen hours of darkness in which to work, to supply and to prepare. The morning and the succeeding hours of daylight would still be the sabbath, during which this lonely sepulchre would be as free from interruption and observation as at night. Then

came another night: and then, before that night fully closed, he was out of the sepulchre, and clothed and prepared for his escape. Thus the time which he remained at the sepulchre was about thirty-six hours, or a day and a half, but, by the Jewish division of time, it embraced parts of three days—one whole sabbath and small fragments of the preceding and subsequent days. Had these thirty-six hours been three consecutive nights they could scarcely have been more favorable for their purposes.

If Joseph and Nicodemus had, or gave out that they had, procured a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes for his burial, they were but acting in accordance with their necessary plan of concealing the real facts by acting in conformity with the supposed facts. The commonest prudence would have dictated to them to make a show, at least, of acting as if he was dead. As no one, however, would open the bundle or sack claimed to contain 100 lbs. of myrrh and aloes, or have had any right to do so, or any thought of questioning its contents, it would also prove an admirable method for at once introducing a little bedding—say a couple of comforts or so—for their prostrated friend, with other appliances for his restoration and reinvigoration. Nothing could be more easy or more natural. However this may be, it is certain that, if they ostensibly acted in conformity with the assumed fact of death, so as not to arouse suspicion or call attention by any unusual conduct, their opportunity of both doing and furnishing everything needed would

be complete. And the previous foresight, providence and fidelity of these loyal Jewish friends are sufficient proofs that they did so, even if subsequent events were not also conclusive of that fact. Even on that first night they could have used whatever means were necessary, if any, to stimulate and encourage his revival, supply him with clothing and the means of disguise, also with sufficient food and water to last him through the sabbath, and agree to come and release him on the night following; and thus avoid the chance of being out of place or being seen about the sepulchre on the sabbath. With a comprehension of the facts as they are gathered from the Gospels themselves, none can doubt that all these things could easily have been done in one night, and almost before that night commenced; and that he was in the hands of the very men to do it.

There is a story in the first Gospel about a Roman guard having been placed around the sepulchre on the day following the crucifixion, and about their being bribed, etc., which may demand notice, although it would deserve none were it supported only by its own merits. For, without excepting even the puerile and mythic fancies which created a nativity and infancy for Jesus, it is the most naked interpolation or after-thought and the most imbecile concoction in the whole Gospels. It is in the following words:—"Now the next day that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remem-

ber that this deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will arise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch. * * And behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment like snow : And for fear of him the *keepers* did shake, and became as dead men. * * * Now when they [the two Marys] were going [to the sepulchre], behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught : and this saying is commonly reported, among the Jews to this day." This is all that relates to the matter. Permit us to briefly examine its credibility, as well as its effect upon our theory of the facts, if it were even true.

As in nearly all such interpolations or injections of subsequently conceived explanations or occurrences, this story bears on its face the evidences of its origin and

the purpose for which it was invented. The story is mentioned by this gospel alone ; a fact which, in so striking, important and public a transaction as this, is almost or quite conclusive of the fact that it is not true. The need and purpose which called it into being, also, appears upon its face. The Christians, long afterwards, asserted that the body of Jesus had not only disappeared from the tomb, but had reappeared alive. The Jews would not believe this, but answered the story of his disappearance, by saying that his disciples had come and stole it. This had come to be the common answer, as it would seem, in the days of the writer. And the writer clearly shows that it was to meet and rebut this charge that the story was told.

It appears upon its face, also, that the story was evidently written in some after age or generation. For it alleges that the story of stealing the body was "commonly reported among the Jews *until this day*." Such an expression clearly indicates that the occurrence itself must have happened in a former age or generation. For we do not say of a report that originated in our own time, that it continued to be reported "until this day ;" but use this expression to indicate a traditional report or one perpetuated from a former age or from former generations. These three facts alone :—that it was written long afterwards, and almost certainly in a subsequent age ; that it was written to meet an existing and special need ; and that it is never even referred to by any of the other Gospels, are quite sufficient to destroy its weight as evidence.

It will be seen, also, that the story tells us, not only of the meetings, movements and consultations of the high Jewish and Roman officials, but their very language, their private knowledge, and the secret acts, purposes and language of persons who could only have given them publicity at their own highest peril. Such knowledge could never have been possessed by the Galilean fishermen who were then in hiding for their own lives. Such detailed knowledge of thoughts, language and events of such a character, could only have been, *all*, known to God, and it will appear, pretty certainly, that God was not the author of this story before we have done with it.

Let us glance at the probabilities, or rather improbabilities, of this story. The very first assertion in it shows, that it emanated from a person ignorant of the customs of the Jews, or who availed himself of such ignorance in those whom he specially addressed. The day on which the "chief priests and Pharisees" are said to have assembled and determined upon this request for a guard, and then went *in a body* to Pilate to make the request, and then proceeded to station and set the guard and seal the sepulchre, was the *Passover Sabbath*, the most sacred day in the Jewish calendar. To suppose that the "chief priests and Pharisees" — those exemplars of Jewish piety who were enraged at Jesus for even healing the sick on the sabbath, would devote their time to all this on this "high" sabbath day, was

supposing the unsupposable — the morally impossible. Had they have desired to make such a request on that day, they would unquestionably have sent a messenger with a request for Pilate himself to have it done. For we have seen, not only how sacred these men regarded and kept the sabbath, but we have seen that they regarded this special day so sacred that they dared not enter the Roman governor's palace even the day before, at the trial of Jesus, lest it might defile them so as to disqualify them for their sacred privileges and duties on this very day, when they are said, not only to have visited Pilate, but to have engaged thus largely in temporal affairs.

And again : This was evidently done,—at the earliest, on sabbath morning—the morning after the crucifixion. Now, if the disciples were likely to steal the body, could they not steal it the first night as well as afterwards, and were they not as likely to do so? And had not the body been delivered, from the *very first* and *unconditionally*, into possession and control of two disciples of Jesus, to do what they pleased with it? If the high priests and Pharisees did not know them to be actual or open disciples of Jesus, they suspected it, and substantially charged it on one of them, and knew that they had opposed his conviction and had been his most active friends throughout. They had all left before he was taken from the cross, and could not be supposed to have known where he was taken to. For none seems to have followed and watched where they took him except the two Marys. But if they were informed about the matter at all, they must have known that he had

been at once delivered over to his friends when taken from the cross, and deposited in the private tomb of Joseph ; and that Pilate, nor nobody else, had any right to further interfere, in any way, with that tomb or with the body or the disposal of it. Is it possible, then, to believe, that these men, knowing that Jesus had foretold his resurrection and being desirous to test its truth, should have never said a word about it while the body was under legal control and Pilate had a right to grant their request, but have permitted the execution to close and the body to pass unconditionally out of all legal control, into the hands of its private friends, and to have remained under the control of those friends long enough to have conveyed it to Jericho or beyond the Jordan, and then, for the first time, solemnly assemble and consult about asking Pilate to do what neither he nor they had the slightest right to do, even if it were not too late for any practical use? The idea is incredible. Both they and Pilate would have known, that he had neither the right nor the inclination to grant their request. And had they made so irrational and useless a request, Pilate would have delighted to refuse it, if he had thought it would in the least humor them, or favor their purposes in this matter, as he did their request concerning his insulting superscription on the cross.

But again : How came these priests to remember that Jesus had said, that "After three days I shall arise again?" Jesus had, really, never said any such thing to anybody,—but certainly not to those priests. He had said in the Temple that, if they would tear down

that Temple, he would build it again in three days, but no allusion was made, in any form, to his own death or the prospect of it ; nor could or did any one who heard it suppose for a moment, that his remark had any allusion to his own death or resurrection, or that it had any secret meaning beyond the plain import of the words used. Nor did Jesus ever say that they had any such occult meaning, even to his disciples. After he *had* reappeared on the third day, *then* some of the writers of the Gospels or their subsequent aiders took it upon themselves to explain it by gratuitously telling us that, in speaking of rearing the Temple in three days, he *meant* the temple of his own body. How then, we repeat, could these priests have *remembered* and been so anxious about, what they had never heard ? At this very time, the Apostles themselves had no thought of his resurrection, and declared that they had never even heard of any *scripture* that he *was* to rise from the dead, and regarded the report of two of their own women, who had seen the empty sepulchre and had actually seen and talked to Jesus himself after he had left the sepulchre, as mere "idle tales ;" and had actually prepared spices for his burial on that very third day. And yet, at that very time (we are long afterwards told), the Jewish priests remembered all about his going to rise, and were breaking the sabbath to get Pilate to do what he had no right to do, in order to prevent any pretence of Jesus having fulfilled his prediction, by keeping him from getting into the hands of his friends, when he had been delivered into their hands from the moment he had left the cross !

And again : Had all these "chief priests and Pharisees" have known of such a prediction, and have publicly gone to Pilate about it, and have publicly gone with a guard to the sepulchre and set a seal on it, to prevent any chance of imposition in the matter,—and done all this on the sabbath of the Passover, when the city was crowded with strangers and Jerusalem was ringing with the trial and crucifixion of its pretended King and Christ, What would have been the result upon the people? Such singular and public proceedings would have spread the news of their object "like wild fire" through the assembled thousands. The rumor of such a declaration on the part of Jesus, and the fact that the rulers of the people were taking up the matter seriously, and the possibility of so stupendous an event would have created such a fever of curiosity and such a contagion of excitement that thousands would have rushed to Calvary to witness the result. There would have been a guard of tens of thousands of people instead of half a dozen soldiers.

But again : The reported conduct of the Jewish rulers and of the guards who reported to them is, if possible, more incredible than anything in the whole story. That a guard of Roman soldiers on special duty should have seen an angel come down from heaven, with "raiment as white as snow" and a "countenance like lightning," in the midst of a "great earthquake," and open the very tomb they were guarding, is a matter, one would say, that is somewhat incredible. That no one else in the city should have been disturbed by so great an earthquake, and that these soldiers should have left their post

without orders or without at once reporting to their superior officers is also quite incredible—quite unlike all other earthquakes, and quite unlike the iron fidelity and discipline of the Roman soldier. That a few of these guards should go and tell “all these things that were done” to the chief priests; that the Sanhedrim should be assembled; that under the very nose of Pilate and almost certainly in the presence of secret sympathizers with Jèsus, these Jewish rulers should have dared to offer a bribe to a number of Pilate’s soldiers to report a lie, and should have been so silly and so lavish of money as to give them “large money” to smother the fact of a “great earthquake” and other divine manifestations, and to report that most stupid, dangerous and improbable of all lies,—namely, that “his disciples came by night and stole him away *while we slept*,” is certainly very incredible, when told of all this intelligent and pious body of Jews. These facts are rendered still more incredible when we reflect upon the probabilities of the immediate exposure of their infamous conduct, and still more when we reflect upon its utter uselessness; since they knew that they were bribing but a part of the guard, and that the other soldiers of the guard who had gone to their quarters or elsewhere, would not be influenced by this bribe to their fellows, but were probably, at that moment, telling to their officers or comrades this whole marvellous story they were thus trying to suppress by the most shameful means. It is bad enough to charge the whole body of the Jewish priests and elders with being unscrupulous villains, without charging them with being idiots as well. That these soldiers, also, should have dared the palpable risk,—nay, the moral certainty,

of immediate exposure and certain execution, by taking this degrading bribe : that they should all, moreover, consent to degrade themselves as men, to stultify and dishonor themselves as soldiers, and by their own report charge themselves with the capital and unpardonable offence of "sleeping at their posts," and that, too, upon the less than worthless promise of the men who bribed them, that *they* would *persuade* Pilate to forgive them for this unpardonable military crime—that they, whose very advocacy would but seal their doom with Pilate, would persuade him to save them !—that these soldiers should have so acted, we say, is immeasurably incredible. Taking the whole story together we remember no similar bundle of palpable improbabilities and absurdities, in so short a compass, which has ever received the credence of intelligent people.

Even as the story stands, however, it might have claimed forbearance from our theory ; since its truth would have insured rather than hindered the operations that theory supposes to have taken place. We have seen that Jesus was delivered to his most powerful and active friends, about an hour and a half before sundown on the *day preceding* this demand on Pilate for a guard ; and that there was ample time and opportunity for any kind of assistance to have been furnished before that demand was even determined upon. Indeed there was ample time and opportunity to furnish them and apply restoratives that same evening. And had anything been

left incomplete, we know that both Joseph and Nicodemus were members of that body which met and determined upon asking for a guard, and would have known of the purpose to procure it, from the very first movement in the matter; and could have been able to furnish whatever else might have been needed, and to have notified Jesus, long before the proceedings required to procure and set such a guard could have been gone through with. But this is said upon the supposition that such a guard would have been antagonistic to the purposes of the friends of Jesus. Precisely the reverse, however, as we have said, would have been the fact. The guard, if it existed, consisted of part of the Temple guard, and were the most trusted troops of Pilate. It would most probably have been intrusted to the very centurions who managed the crucifixion. These men were Romans—Pilate's favorite guard and household troops—the men that held the Temple itself, and were but the agents of his will, and, as the very story admits, were accountable to *him alone* for their conduct. Such a guard would have been the identical thing to secure absolute immunity from special and unsuspected facilities and all chance of disturbance. We have seen just how much cause Joseph and Nicodemus had to dread Pilate and his soldiers in this matter. Not only could they have had free access to the body under such a guard, but they could have made the officer of the guard, by a mere word from Pilate, their own instruments in everything. But, had the guard actually prevented ingress into the sepulchre, we have seen that no ingress was necessary after the guard was set. Nor could the guard have hindered any *necessary* operation, until the

time came for the escape of Jesus. And the story itself tells us that the guard had actually left in time for Jesus to actually escape before it was fully daylight. If it were not a benefit, it was certainly set too late and left too early to be an injury. If, indeed, such a guard were ever set, the true source and purpose of its employment can scarcely permit of a doubt. Pilate had no right, as he most certainly had no inclination, to interfere further in the matter, unless he did so at the instance and for the purpose of favoring Joseph and Nicodemus in their friendly purposes. Seeing that they had been followed and watched by that indefatigable devotee, Mary Magdalen, and her associate, it may well have been that Joseph and Nicodemus feared that the disciples of Jesus, hearing of his being placed in this sepulchre from these female disciples, might attempt to visit and look upon the body, and might even attempt to take possession of it with a view of burying it themselves. They may even have known of the burial preparations that those humbler and more open followers of Jesus had been actually making; for they actually had been making such preparations and intended to bury him themselves, on the very day he reappeared. And it was known that Jesus had taught his disciples that it was lawful to do any "good work" on the sabbath, and that there was danger that they might come and take the body at night or on the sabbath. Such an attempt, or even a visiting of the body to look upon it, would have greatly endangered the chances of both secrecy and escape. The secrecy and discretion of this ignorant body of men, and much less of the ignorant women who accompanied them, were by no means to be depended upon in so dangerous and mo-

mentous an affair. And we find, by what occurred afterwards, that the matter never was intended to have been divulged to the disciples beyond what was unavoidable. These two men were the Jewish rulers, then, if any, who instigated this setting of a guard. They, alone, had either sufficient motive or power to procure it. It is *possible* that, to prevent suspicion of any kind, they procured the concurrence of the chief men of the Sanhedrim, of which they were members, by suggesting that, if the disciples came and took the body and gave it a public burial, the reaction which might arise from the sympathy this might excite, would bring odium on those who caused the death. Other than motives of this kind, indeed, the Jewish rulers had no concern in the matter. They had been inexorable in their purpose, but the motive of that purpose was not vindictiveness, although they were incensed at Jesus. The motive was clearly declared, and pertained to the public good. It was "expedient" that he should die for the security of the Jewish people and their privileges. Had he denied his kingly pretensions on his trial, or given satisfactory assurances that he would abandon them, the matter would never have been pressed to extremities at all. After his sentence and crucifixion the fears which had stimulated the Jewish rulers, no longer existed. Jesus could never re-appear openly, since his condemnation and sentence would still stand in force until executed; and his re-appearance would be at once proof that it had not been executed, and leave him subject to their power at any moment, and to re-crucifixion on his old sentence. Having this power and knowing that he was thenceforth powerless as a political or religious agitator of the Jews,

they would probably have ignored, or even been gratified at his secret escape, so far as he himself was concerned. The real danger, even to Jesus, did not lie here. But his re-appearance or discovery would bring down all their power and vengeance upon the members of their own body who had been secretly untrue to them, and had aided in his escape, as well as upon Pilate, who had fought them from the beginning, and had thus finally and secretly outwitted them. To secure the proof of their complicity in his escape, and their vengeance upon them for it, they would have certainly seized Jesus, at whatever cost, if an opportunity had offered. And, if ever these priests were told of any earthquakes, angels, etc., it was told them to deter them from inquiring as to the real facts concerning his burial.

However these possibilities may have been, we are really concerned only to know that Jesus having entered that sepulchre or room in a live condition, there was ample and especially favorable opportunities for his revival, as well as for aiding his revival and for preparing for his escape, and that all this actually occurred, and by natural means and in natural ways; that he actually did recover from his swoon and prostration, and was not only left free to come out *before day* on the morning after the sabbath, but that he *did* come out, clothed and prepared for escape; and that, as there were two persons who put him there, so there were two persons there before day on that morning, to help and aid him; and

that in this simple and natural revival from a swoon, within this secret recess, under the supervision of these two indefatigable Jews, we have the *simple reality* of the *basic fact* of the most potent of human religions, and one which, for nineteen centuries, has inspired the lives and consoled the death-beds of unnumbered millions of Earth's bravest and best. Mysterious and altogether wonderful are thy methods, O God !

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ESCAPE.

WE have considered some of the concurrent and antecedent facts bearing upon the vital condition of Jesus during his punishment upon the cross and during his stay in his rock retreat. It remains still for us to review the events connected with his reappearance and escape, and to determine their bearing upon the question at issue. For it will be perceived at once, that these events are of the greatest value in interpreting the previous condition, conduct and motives of the parties concerned; since they are largely correlated to them as their direct effects. And it is by this class of presumptive evidence that this question is to be determined. The mere fact of the reappearance of Jesus in bodily life is a matter depending upon more direct testimony. This fact was, as we have seen, untruly and illogically assumed, by his ignorant followers, to be proof that he had been raised from the dead, when they should, to the contrary, have accepted it as conclusive proof that he had not been dead at all. The fact of a resurrection from death and the mode of that resurrection, however, are asserted without any direct proof or a pretence of direct proof of it. It was a mere assumption,—made not

only without support, but in defiance of a conclusive presumption of its untruth, and one which was sustained not only by the resistless fact of subsequent life, but by the entire body of the facts. No one *saw* Jesus rise from the dead. If it ever occurred it was far more hidden than that of Lazarus. It occurred at the most secret hour of the night, within a closed and lonely rock sepulchre, out of sight of, and unknown to, all mortals. Jesus did not even *say* that he had risen from the dead or that God had raised him from the dead. His declaration to his disciples who had refused to believe that their women had actually seen him, was in these words:—"Ought not Christ to have *suffered these things*, and to enter into his glory." There is neither an affirmation of his death, nor of his resurrection, but his peculiar expression, "*suffered these things*" would be more likely to be used to express his sufferings under our theory than in saying that it was necessary that he should have died and have risen from the dead; but sounds more like an *evasion* than either. The complete indefiniteness of the expression would seem to indicate that he avoided actually affirming either that he was dead or had been resurrected, but allowed them to *infer* it. This, at least, is what *we* must do, if we believe it at all. The sole evidence of his resurrection (not his mere reappearance) is an *inference* from facts on the cross which, as we have seen, could not have even endangered life. If there are other reasons to believe in the resurrection, they must be found in the after occurrences. In both the antecedent and subsequent evidence, the supporters of all these Gospel miracles find little save "broken reeds" that yield and pierce them. For it is here that these old mistakes and

fabrications exhibit their greatest weakness and leave the surest evidences of their true character. Their authors themselves were neither critical nor logical, and they had not reached that point of mental progress which enabled them to clearly, if at all, perceive the correlation between events and their natural causes and consequences. It is here that they are most unguarded and exposed

In reviewing this after-evidence we have before us two opposite theories as to the essential or controlling facts,—first: the natural and rational theory:—that the evidence furnished no perceivable or adequate natural cause why Jesus *should* have died on the cross, or any evidence that he *did* die there, but shows, to the reverse of this, that, from what occurred there, he ought to have survived, and that he did survive, and was afterwards revived in his rock retreat and escaped, with or without the aid of others. Second: the supernatural theory,—that Jesus was an Incarnate God, at once the Messiah of the Jews and the *conditional* Redeemer of mankind; that he actually and willingly gave up his life or suffered death on the cross as a vicarious sacrifice and atonement for the sins of all true believers; that, while actually and completely dead, he rose from the dead by divine power, in contravention of the laws of Nature.

Now it is manifest that, if Jesus was a Divine Redeemer who came among men to die for their sins and to arise again from death for their justification, upon the condition of their believing in the truth of these facts, his conduct will, in all things, conform to his divine character and mission and to the ends proposed ; while it is equally manifest that, if he were a mere condemned man who was fortunate or favored enough to have survived his punishment, and was compelled to use the necessary means to escape from the dread penalty which would still have hung over him, then we may expect to find him act according to the dictates of human nature when inspired by the motives and necessities which such a situation involved. And perhaps there is no better way to prepare our minds to determine the true significance of this after-conduct, than by endeavoring to realize the course of action he would be likely to pursue, or such as would be fairly predicable of him, upon these several adverse hypotheses as to his character, situation and purposes ; and see how they severally correspond with the real facts.

Men, by the extreme self-abnegation and mental slavery to which they have been reduced by their superstitious fears and religious training in all things which pertain to this assumed Deity, are content to forego their simplest rights of reason and manhood when estimating his character and conduct, and to satisfy themselves by the supposition that they have neither the capacity to judge, nor the right to question or reason about them—that in some incomprehensible way he must have acted consistently with his divine nature and purpose,

since he *was* divine. But we must again repeat that it is reasoning in a vicious circle to assume his divinity in order to sustain the very facts without which he would never have been thought of as a God. Besides, it is neither reverential nor complimentary to God to suppose that his acts are ungodlike, inconsequent and inefficient. We may indeed fail to comprehend the real purposes or methods of God, but when an alleged purpose of a supposed God, incarnated in the flesh, is plainly told us, and the means he used to accomplish that purpose are precisely such as would necessarily defeat the proposed end, we are untrue to the real God and to ourselves if we fail to exercise our reason in regard to it. The worshippers of Jesus, since his alleged resurrection and consequent apotheosis, have endeavored to maintain that he was both the prophesied Messiah of the Jews and a divine sacrifice or sin-offering for whosoever would believe on him. The real fact, however, is, that these pretensions are utterly incompatible with each other and were not amalgamated or contemporaneously maintained by himself. Before his rejection by the Jews, he had both hoped and endeavored to acquire the temporal Messiahship of the Jews, and had expressly limited his mission and efforts to that peculiar race; and neither friend nor foe ever suspected a purpose involving his vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world. It was only after his punishment and supposed resurrection that that punishment was appropriated as a pre-determined offering for the sins of believers. This new notion was born of the supposed facts upon which it was based, and only after the hopeless failure of his exclusively Jewish project.

After his rejection and crucifixion by the Jews, his Messianic pretensions were at an end, unless he could do something which would produce a total reversion of his rejection,—by a revolution in the opinion of the Jewish rulers and people. For all subsequent pretences about his future or spiritual Messiahship are but the merest makeshifts or subterfuges to cover a palpable failure. It was therefore possible to him, if a God, to take such steps as would not leave his entire pretensions during his public career a mere abortion; and, failing this, or concurrently with it, to use such means as would most efficiently demonstrate his divinity and insure such a belief in himself as would secure the moral salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. These embrace the essential objects of his presence upon Earth. To these, therefore, would his conduct and efforts have been directed, and with all the wisdom and efficiency of a God. This much we have a right to expect,—if he were a God or at all what he is claimed to have been. God's ways may differ from ours, but that difference is not marked by their inconsequentiality, inefficiency and absurdity.

In anticipating the character of his subsequent conduct from such purposes and from the supernatural stand-point, we must observe that absolute power was at his disposal, and was only limited by his desires and purposes. We perceive, also, that the means calculated to insure all men's belief in his divinity, would be such as were calculated, at the same time, to insure the un-

questioning acceptance by the Jews in any character which he had chosen to dictate. All prophecies would have been made to yield to Jehovah himself. What, then, would we have a right to expect of a beneficent Deity, under such circumstances, who was desirous of securing either the recognition of his Messiahship by the Jews (for whatever end), or the recognition by all men of his Godhood and of his resurrection from the dead? Undoubtedly we have a right to expect that he would have had, at least, his actual death publicly and incontestably proven beyond all power of questioning or cavilling; that he would perform his resurrection from the dead publicly and in a manner to render the fact absolutely unquestionable; and that he would perform the whole with such evidences of his divine nature and power as would demonstrate his divinity beyond the possibility of rational doubt. To suppose that the Creator of the human race had predetermined, before their creation, that he would, in the form claimed, redeem them to eternal happiness, upon the condition of their belief in his incarnation, death and resurrection, and to damn them to eternity if they did not believe in them; and yet suppose that he would do less than we have indicated to insure this necessary belief for their salvation, is supposing that that Creator is not only less than a God, but more unjust and less beneficent than any human being would be under like circumstances and with like power. Nay, more, it is supposing a cruel and malignant spirit in the Creator; since he could, without cost or trouble, have furnished the most resistless proofs,—by a mere act of volition. Is it possible, therefore, to suppose that a beneficent Creator who was willing to ignominiously

die to redeem his creatures, could allow those creatures to lose this redemption and be condemned to endless torment, by countless millions, by his refusing to exhibit evidence which would only cost him an act of volition? The bare supposition is blasphemous!

But what proofs or exhibitions should we expect? The specific proofs would have been a matter of indifference, provided they were such as were calculated to insure the requisite belief of those who were to be benefited. The whole matter occurred and was intended for the benefit of man upon condition of his belief in it, and the proofs, therefore, were to affect the minds of men, and if they were from God, they would have been such as to most efficiently convince the human mind. There were thousands of ways of doing it, and God would have known the most efficient way. One method might be briefly suggested, in an off-hand way, however, which might serve for a comparison with the reality which we are considering. Let us suppose, for example, that, when Jesus was taunted on the cross, by his rejecters, with his lack of the divine power which he had professed, he had calmly and kindly explained to them, that it was necessary for their salvation, and to the salvation of all men, that he should die on the cross, and that they were but the necessary instruments of the sacrifice which he was offering for those of the human race who would believe in and accept it; but, at the same time, assure them that he would publicly arise from the dead at mid-day on the day after the approaching sabbath; and that, as faith in his divinity and in the merits of his atonement were a condition of the salvation for which he

died, it was necessary to that end, that they should be unquestionably verified at his resurrection; and request them to bring out the entire city, with all its officials, and its visitors of all nationalities, to witness the proofs of his divinity; and that, to prevent their treating his request lightly, he would cause a "great earthquake" to warn them at sunrise, at noon, and at sunset on the sabbath, and that, on the morning of the day of his resurrection, an angel should appear above the Temple,—with "garments as white as snow," and a "countenance like lightning"—if you will, and summons the people to come and behold the resurrection of God and the salvation of man. To insure the certainty of his death, we will suppose him to direct that, instead of sparing him the breaking of his limbs, they should sever both his limbs and his head from his body, and deposit the whole in the sepulchre.

Let us now suppose all these things to have been actually done, and the peoples and magnates to have assembled, at the appointed midday hour, to witness the resurrection. Behold! Adam and Eve, Abel and Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Moses and Elias, Solomon and David descend from the heavens, as they are respectively announced by a voice from Heaven, and range themselves in mid air above the sepulchre, to witness the "seed of the woman bruise the serpent's head." The vast rock of the sepulchre now becomes more transparent than crystal, and the mutilated remains of the body of God are clearly visible to all eyes. The "forty legions of angels" which Jesus *said* he could command, actually appear, and fill the circle of the heavens with their resplendent glories,

and with the music which "makes glad the city of the living God." An ineffable splendor bathes the entire heavens and illuminates all things with a divine glory. The Temple becomes as transparent as glass, and the "shekina" is seen in unwonted glory hovering over the mercy seat in the "holy of holies." The transparent rock of the sepulchre evaporates, and vanishes in the ambient air. The mutilated remains of Jesus lay naked and exposed in the universal luminosity. In the full sight of the assembled thousands the dissevered head and limbs of the corpse, as if spontaneously, reunite with the body. The color and breath of life return to it: and Jesus rises in all the perfection of his restored manhood and the majesty of his divinity, and of his vindicated Godhood, and is borne aloft unto the heavens between Adam and Eve, amid the "Te Deum laudimus" of the Heavenly Host; while upon the vault of the heavens, in letters of fire, and in all languages, are written the words—"Man is redeemed." There then arises, upon the site of the sepulchre, from out the earth, a vast pyramid of impenetrable diamond, indestructible by man, upon which is recorded these divine events, in all languages, and in letters of diamond light, for the benefit of future generations.

How immeasurably more effective than this the whole matter might have been done by the miracle-working God of the Christians, we need not pause to inquire. We can but think, however, that even this

crude off-hand conception would have presented a far more appropriate, credible and Godlike course, than to have furnished a pretended death which had, literally, neither test nor proof of its reality, and which was so absolutely incredible, from a natural stand-point, as to compel its wisest believers to cover its impossibility by the confession that it was miraculous; and, after this asserted, but wholly incredible death, to have performed his pretended resurrection at the last and most secret hour of the night, in a lonely sepulchre, without witnesses, and while all men slept, and then to have fled in *disguise* from the face of all men, save when meeting his trusted followers in the profoundest secrecy, like any other condemned man escaping and fleeing from the death penalty. Thus, at least, it would appear to the merely human and rational mind unilluminated by grace:—the minds most needing the proper proofs. Could the Jews or others have spurned such proofs of the divinity of Jesus, had he furnished them? And if these or far higher proofs had been necessary to secure the faith of his creatures in the existence of a fact so inherently incredible, and so apparently impossible as that an *infinite* God *could* be domiciled in the compass of a human body, and be born of a woman, and would lead the life of a common mechanic among the people, —Would not a God who loved his creatures well enough to thus humiliate himself for them, and finally to die for them, be more than willing to furnish such proofs for their benefit, when their eternal salvation or damnation, and the success of his own predetermined and death-bought ransom of them were so dependent on them? There can be assigned no even plausible reason or excuse

for his failure to furnish them. With an asserted power which could have furnished any kind of divine manifestation and proof—proof which would bring every priest, infidel and Pharisee in Judæa to his feet, at any time he chose to exert it, he had hitherto exhibited only such evidences as had actually brought upon him the imputation of insanity and the general disbelief and condemnation of the almost entire people whom he had come more especially to benefit. Here, then, in his own past experiences, was an infallible, because actual, test of the efficiency of his methods, and the positive proof of the insufficiency of the kind of evidence already furnished, to secure the belief and acceptance which it was his express purpose to secure. Why did he not furnish it afterwards? The Christian God could have furnished it without cost or trouble, and with far less expenditure of time than was consumed by Jesus in fleeing from, instead of meeting, the Jews. It may be contended, with however bad a grace by the followers of Jesus, that before the crucifixion it was necessary that the Jewish rulers should disbelieve in him, in order that they might cause his crucifixion and thereby secure the necessary vicarious atonement for Humanity, which is now claimed to have been the essential object of his incarnation. But whatever semblance of an apology or explanation this may furnish to the minds of the worshippers of Jesus, the reason and apology wholly failed after his death was fully provided for or accomplished. There could then remain no possible reason why this beneficent incarnated God should either fear or flee from the Jewish power or should refuse or neglect to furnish those incontestible and efficient proofs of his divinity

which he had hitherto failed to furnish ; but, on the contrary, every duty and every inclination of so loving and beneficent a Deity, and such an eternal and forgiving lover of his frail and sinful creatures, would alike impel him to do it, and to do it efficiently. For, if even the Jewish rulers had erred in rejecting Jesus as the Christ, they had erred through *ignorance*, as Peter, in his sermon to the Jews, expressly admits—(Acts iii. 17), and also Paul (II. Cor. ii. 7 and 8). But, were it possible to offer a reason why Jesus failed to demonstrate his divinity by such further exhibitions of divine power, of the character suggested, Can any *conceivable reason or apology* be given, upon the Christian theory, why Jesus continued to refuse to permit the public or any of the Jews to have visible or personal evidence of the facts which actually *did* occur—why he not only performed his pretended resurrection out of all human knowledge, sight or anticipation, and in a way forbidding all possible knowledge or verification of it, but concealed from the public and from the Jews his person and all chance of direct personal evidence of even the fact of his re-appearing alive ? For St. Peter expressly declares that he was not shown to the public after the resurrection, but only “unto witnesses chosen before God, *even to us*, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead”—(Acts x. 40, 41). Why was not a single citizen of Judea permitted to recognize him and know he was alive ? Why must the Jews have been compelled, again, to rely for proof of this final act of divine power upon the *say-so* of these chosen witnesses and trained Galilean followers of their own professed Jewish Messiah ?

Having seen the weight due to the subsequent con-

duct of Jesus in determining the reality of his resurrection and divinity, and attempted to suggest the general character of a course of conduct consistent with the truth of those facts and with the alleged divine purposes of Jesus, we may now perform a like service from the natural and purely human stand-point and in conformity with the interpretation of the facts for which we have contended. Treating Jesus as a mere man, we are to infer that he would have exhibited that correlation and consistency between his conduct and his objects and motives which is a trait of human action—that he would have acted as a mere man would be likely to act under the entire conditions and circumstances under which he acted, and under the necessities, objects and motives involved, subject to the appropriate modifications resulting from any peculiarity in his own character, relations, etc.

What, then, were the conditions existing at the time of his supposed resurrection? We have a conception of them already. He had been sentenced to death, and had survived the partial execution of his sentence, with the secret knowledge and connivance of Pilate and his Jewish coadjutors—Joseph and Nicodemus. He had been immediately delivered, in his swooning condition, but without despatchment, into the hands of these two astute and faithful, but secret Jewish disciples, and had remained under their exclusive control and in a place admirably adapted to all their purposes and to the profoundest privacy, as has been shown. The sentence of death upon Jesus still remained unexecuted and in full force, and to have openly re-appeared would have been

to give the signal for his own re-arrest and execution, besides proving the ruin of his friends Nicodemus and Joseph, and probably of Pilate himself. For it would not only have been legitimately assumed as positive proof of the insufficiency of his punishment and as presumptive evidence of the connivance of those concerned, but it would have recalled the many additional proofs of their intention to save him which we have already referred to, and have awakened inquiry into other and more secret evidences of their purpose.

It was to the last degree important, therefore, both to Jesus and his aiders and benefactors, that the fact of his revival should not become known to the Jews. Any mere subsequent rumor of his having miraculously risen from the dead would, of course, be met with incredulity and endeavors to suppress it; but an accredited assertion of his being actually alive and at large would have awakened all the powers and vengeance of the Jewish rulers. A secret flight and continued banishment, *in cognito*, became, then, at once the necessity and paramount object of both Jesus and his secret aiders. The immediate necessity and object was to get his disciples out of Judea, and for him himself to first escape into their old haunts in Galilee, where he could remain in hiding until matters had quieted down, preparatory to his final exit from Palestine.

His escape on the first night was probably impossible on account of his prostration, and possibly the want of suitable means of disguise, and would certainly be dangerous on account of the ignorance of his disciples of

the true facts. The same causes might have operated on the Sabbath, even if their movements and his travelling on the Sabbath would not have been calculated to attract attention. It became necessary, however, to effect their purpose on the succeeding night ; since it was morally certain that his disciples would be looking after his body early on the following morning. The practical difficulty, in fact, arose from his own devoted followers. These were expecting and had prepared to bury him on that day ; and it was certain that no excuse could be invented to put off his disciples if they came for the body and failed to procure or see it. It was necessary, therefore, to complete their operations before daylight, and give his disciples to understand, not the true facts, with which they dare not trust to the discretion of such a crowd of men and women, but that he had miraculously risen from the dead and had directed them to go and meet him in Galilee, and thus get them out of Jerusalem. But, Would they believe this from any but his own lips ? To avoid this manifest danger, it was evidently important to delay the matter to the last moment, and, if necessary, that Jesus himself should see some of them and give them the necessary assurances and directions. Evidently such was the situation from our stand-point. In the very fidelity of these Galilean followers lay the chief cause of delay and danger.

Such being the situation and purposes we might expect to find that every preparation had been completed and that Jesus was re-clothed and thoroughly disguised

and out of the sepulchre, ready for flight, before it was fairly daylight on the morning in question—even “while it was yet dark”—(John xx. 1). We should expect, however, that he would still remain at hand on account of his followers, anticipating their early appearance and possible disbelief of his friends. We should expect to find exactly “two men” (Luke xxiv. 4) there with him to the last, to aid and help him. And whether Mary Magdalene, or others after her, chose to speak of these men as angels, we should feel none the less sure that these two men who were his guardian angels at the last, were the same Joseph and Nicodemus who had been his guardian angels from the first, and who had a deep personal interest in his successful escape and secret flight.

We should expect that restless devotee, Mary Magdalene, and her companion, who saw where he was placed, would be at the sepulchre by the time they could see their way, with the spices to prepare the body for burial; and that they would find the sepulchre already open and the body gone—(Mark xvi. 1-4. Luke xxiv. 1-3. John xx. 1). If we were afterwards told that Mary Magdalene actually peeped into the sepulchre and “saw a *young man* sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment” (Mark xvi., 5), we should only conclude, if we believed the story, that she had come a little earlier than she was expected, and that Jesus had not yet cast off his long white grave-cloth; although we should be inclined to set the whole story down as a false report, as it is in conflict with three of the Gospels. We should expect these women to be told by Joseph or Nicodemus, that Jesus had arisen, and instruct them to tell his disci-

ples that he would meet them in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 7) ; and that, to make matters sure, they would direct Jesus to follow them and confirm it. And, having finally finished their part of the work, we should expect that they would leave, and we should hear no more of them ; nor even think more of them, unless it were to still wonder whether they really were the "Moses and Elias" who secretly met Jesus at night in Galilee, when he was in the midst of his hopeful schemes for the temporal Messiahship.

We should expect, also, that when this report was taken to the disciples, the men would regard the affair as mere idle tales of these women ; but that, to make sure of it, we might expect some of them, perhaps Peter and John, to go to the sepulchre to see for themselves. We should expect them, also, to find the sepulchre open and empty, but to find no one near it. Upon looking in, they would, of course, see his grave-clothes lying there still, but they probably would not find them lying in the form they would be if a God had spontaneously risen out of them, but as if the head-cloth or napkin had been taken off and rolled up and thrown aside in one place, and the linen wrapper taken off and thrown in another place, very much after the natural manner of a man—(John xx. 6, 7).

We should, not only be sure that Jesus would not be allowed to escape in his grave-clothes, nor in clothes at all similar to those he habitually wore, but should feel sure that his secret aiders would furnish him such clothing as would, without attracting attention, most effectually disguise him, and that they would otherwise complete

his disguise by altering his hair and beard, staining his skin, or the like, so that even his own disciples could not recognize him from his appearance.

Having made himself known to those women and sent word to his disciples, we should expect that he would aim to leave the city and its environs before the people were astir, and then seek some place of concealment near the road, until night approached, with the intent to travel the next night to Galilee; but that, in leaving the city, he would not follow any of his accustomed routes (not knowing what might happen), but would go westward towards Emmaus—in the opposite direction. And should he see two of his disciples (one of whom was Simon Peter) walking to Emmaus, we should expect that his anxiety to know the effect of his message and why they were still at Jerusalem, would induce him to join them with a view to ascertain. And we should be no whit surprised to find that he entered into a long conversation with them, as they walked, in which they informed him of his own crucifixion and the report that he had left the sepulchre and was alive, or that they should invite him to eat with them in the village, and that he gladly accepted the invitation; or that through all this long conversation, these disciples never once penetrated his disguise, nor ever once suspected that it was their master until they discovered it by his peculiar mode of blessing the food; or that Jesus, upon perceiving that they had recognized him, should be panic-stricken and flee, lest their exclamations or demonstrations should betray him; since we know these sudden and panic flights were characteristic of him.

We should expect that the effect of this *rencontre* and conversation would be that Jesus would perceive the necessity of seeing his disciples and finally settling their doubts, so that they might leave before mischief were done ; and that for that purpose, and as darkness was approaching, he would follow these disciples to their retreat in the city, and there meet his disciples at night and then finally leave for Galilee that same night. And, as he had been fasting all day and had fled from the table without eating, that evening, we should expect that, after his disciples had failed to recognize him, and he had finally induced most of them to believe in his identity, the very first thing would be to ask his disciples for something to eat—a matter very *human*, but also very natural and necessary to a human :—and that they would likely give him his favorite—"broiled fish," with perhaps "an honeycomb" in addition—(Luke xxiv. 41-44). But why continue in this strain further. For, of course, it has been perceived from the first, that we have simply adopted the gospel recitals of the actual facts, of subsequent occurrence, for our suppositions or inferred prediction of them ; or, in other words, we have inferred that Jesus, as a *mere man*, would, under his circumstances, have been most likely to do the very things which he did do. But, Has not this course of treatment clearly shown, that what was really done by all parties was not only compatible with the actual human nature, objects and motives as contended for by us, but was what was especially likely to have been done ? Was there a single natural and credible fact that occurred which does not correspond with and confirm our theory of the facts as to the crucifixion and of his continued

life and revival, or one which does not find its natural and full explanation in the fact that Jesus was a *mere man*, secretly escaping from a partially executed, but still pending sentence of death, under the special circumstances contended for? Have we found, in it all, one act indicative of a divine nature or a divine purpose? Was not the whole matter, indeed, palpably and pitiably *human*!

There is one fact, however, of such controlling weight as to deserve separate and special consideration, namely: that he was thoroughly and intentionally disguised. This fact, in itself, is of a definitive and conclusive nature in reference both to the character and motives of Jesus. And, although it seems to have been utterly overlooked because of its absolute incompatibility with the received notions of Jesus and his resurrection, we aver, that no fact could be more plainly and incontestably pointed out by the evidence:—that it is, in fact, beyond rational doubt. We are told in John's account, that when Jesus came to Mary Magdalene, she "*saw* Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus;" that she thought it was a *gardener*, and addressed him as such in reference to his own body; but that Jesus responded by simply addressing her by her name—by saying the single word, *Mary*, and that this devoted woman knew him instantly and without another word. Here we find a woman who would probably recognize him even sooner than his own mother, and who actually recognized him by his *voice* in the annunciation of a single accustomed word, speaking face to face with Jesus about his own body without ever suspecting his identity with her mas-

ter ; and that, too, when it must have been fair daylight, for it was after Peter and John had visited the sepulchre. Now, What is the *necessary* inference from this ? No unbiased mind can fail to perceive that Jesus must have been disguised most thoroughly—more thoroughly than any mere change of clothes would disguise him, to have deceived this woman under such circumstances. His very face, hair, beard, etc., must have been changed.

On the evening of the same day, he appeared to two of his disciples, in daylight, and walked and talked with them a long time and sat down to eat with them. Unless disguised these men would have recognized him even at a great distance, or among many thousands. But, although they had heard that he was out and alive, they talked to him about his own pretensions, of their hopes of his having been the Messiah, of his crucifixion and the report of his resurrection, inquired of him if he was a stranger in Jerusalem and invited him to eat with them, etc., without ever once suspecting who he was. We then witness a similar phenomenon and proof to that which occurred with the Magdalene. When they saw and heard his peculiar manner of blessing the bread, they instantly recognized him ; and when he saw that they had recognized him, he as instantly fled, before a word could be uttered ; evidently to prevent the possibility of his exposure to others in the house—(Luke xxiv. 13-32). Could it be possible that these disciples would have failed to even suspect who he really was and to regard him as a stranger, under all these circumstances, unless his disguise was most thorough and complete, when they knew him so intimately that they in-

stantly recognized him by his accustomed mode of doing a single private act? In both the instances cited the same significant and convincing facts occurred. In both instances he was *actually* and *instantly* recognized by a *single* fact, but in each case, also, that recognition and fact occurred through his *voice* or *action*, and not by his personal *appearance*. So far as his personal appearance was concerned he was a perfect stranger to them, and might have remained so. By mere sight he was never once recognized by a single one of his disciples at any time after his re-appearance. The Evangelist perceived that this failure to recognize their master by sight was a marvellous affair, and with a view, evidently, to avoid any question as to whether it actually *was* Jesus, he undertakes to account for it; but does so in a manner so very Luke-ish as to excite a smile. He regards it as having been a miracle, and says that "their *eyes* were *holden* that they *should not* know him!"* What a confession!—And what a silly one! If there were reason enough to miraculously hold their eyes to prevent them from recognizing him by his visible appearance, Why were they allowed, at the very first time there was any chance of danger from their recognition, to actually recognize him by other senses or other means than his personal appearance? Luke was, however, well justified in one thing, at least from his stand-point:—it *did* require a miracle to account for their not recognizing him, if he were not disguised, a fact which Luke, of course, would never have thought of suspecting of his God. Mark was less cautious, however, for, in speaking of this same meeting, he expressly says, not that the disciples' "eyes were holden," but that Jesus himself "*appeared in another form!*"—(Mark xvi. 12).

That Jesus knew he was unrecognizable and that he not only anxiously avoided all chances of exposure, but even avoided and delayed disclosing himself, beyond the sheerest necessity, to his devoted disciples, until they could meet in greater safety in Galilee, is here fully shown. He not only suffered these disciples to take him for a stranger, but he was parting from them, leaving them still under that impression, when their invitation to eat with them arrested his departure. And his precipitate and panic flight when he found himself suddenly recognized in a place where he could not explain, and where even such an exclamation as that given by the Magdalene, on discovering him, would endanger him, shows, conclusively, the terror with which a mere chance of exposure inspired him and the timid and cautious care with which he guarded against it. And yet, these men from whom he was concealing his identity, even in private, were not only devoted followers and bosom friends, but one of them was his chief Apostle and worshipper, Simon Peter; as we subsequently learn (Luke xxiv. 34, 35).

After fleeing from these disciples Jesus followed them in the night into Jerusalem, and entered their secret retreat immediately after them. And here, where more necessary, we have another scene which proves his disguisement. He here came upon the residue of his apostles, and not one of them recognized him—not one of those men who had been his daily and nightly

companions for three years and up to the last three days, knew him by his appearance, although they knew he had left the sepulchre, and had that moment been informed by their two companions that they had seen him.

Matthew tells us that, according to appointment, Jesus afterwards met his disciples in a mountain in Galilee. And here we are told that some of his disciples "worshipped him: but *some doubted*." So unnatural did he seem to them, that they found it almost impossible to realize that it was him. No doubt Jesus was prepared, also, to change the degree or character of the disguises or alterations in his person.

Turning now to the twenty-first chapter of John, we find the last detailed account of the meeting of Jesus with his disciples. Here we find, that the disciples were in their fishing smack in the sea of Galilee and about 200 cubits from the shore, from whence Jesus hailed and talked to them. And yet none of them suspected who it was, even at that short distance; although they would, perhaps every man of them, under ordinary conditions, have readily recognized him at more than ten times that distance. The first to suspicion his identity with their master was John, but only on account of

his successful direction to them in their fishing. The disciples went ashore and had a fish-dinner with him ;—but we are told that “ none of his disciples durst ask him, Who art thou, knowing it was the Lord.” Here we find that even at this late hour the disciples not only failed to recognize Jesus by his appearance, but that they had learned that his identity was a subject which was not to be mooted or mentioned, except by himself and in his own time and way. It was a matter which they might know, but of which, as yet, they must not whisper, even.

To an unbiased mind these scenes are conclusive proof, that Jesus was both completely and intentionally disguised, and that he was anxiously and timidly concealing himself from every chance of exposure and re-arrest. Every word and act of his from the moment he left that sepulchre, was simply and purely that of a *disguised fugitive*. The only hope of even the semblance of an explanation of his non-recognition by his disciples, —namely, the difficulty of their believing so marvellous a fact as his resurrection, is completely negated by the whole testimony. The evidence shows, that Jesus did not object to his disciples knowing of his escape, provided that they learned it at the proper time and place, and with the proper explanations to at once prevent them from conceiving the real nature of the occurrence, and from prematurely and improperly exposing the fact of his escape, with the view of preventing the exposure of the complicity of his benefactors, as well as all chances of his own arrest. At night, and in assured secrecy, he was not afraid to meet them and let them know who he was. He dared not confess the real means and mode of

his recovery and escape, firstly : because even if he himself had been willing to trust that dangerous secret to so many persons, his benefactors would have forbidden any idea of such a thing ; and secondly : his own past teachings, pretensions, and relations to these men rendered it almost impossible to confess his final humiliating and mere human failure. Nor did these disciples stick at the mere marvellousness of any power which Jesus might have been supposed to have exercised : it was not their habit. It was nothing of that kind which prevented them from recognizing his person. The Magdalene and the two disciples both recognized and believed in his vital presence, instantly and without explanation or assurance, from mere voice and manner. It was not that they did not or could not recognize him and believe in his identical bodily life and presence, but that they could not recognize him by his personal appearance at all ; while they *did* recognize him by a single word or habit. Their eyes, only, were "holden," and those *only* in the matter of *personal appearance*. This was the sole difficulty. And this, also, is conclusive proof that his personal appearance was thoroughly altered and disguised. Was he a disguised and fugitive God, or a disguised and fugitive man ?

There is another fact which bears upon the question of the resurrection and divinity of Jesus, that deserves a brief, but serious consideration. Since the failure of the

palpably temporal and openly avowed schemes of Jesus to become "King of the Jews," and his consequent prosecution and punishment, it has been claimed that he fully contemplated these results from the beginning; and that he had frequently and plainly told his disciples that he was to be crucified, but that, on the third day after, he would arise from the dead. How far is this claim justified by the facts? In those characteristic and extreme fits of depression and despondency—those fits in which he became so "exceeding sorrowful," and to which he became more and more subject, and at times when he felt most keenly the toils of his enemies closing round him, and his mind was despondingly contemplating the natural results of a failure of his politico-religious schemes, it is quite conceivable that even his forebodings of coming failure and death may have found expression in a general way, in the presence of his disciples. But, that he originally expected, or habitually contemplated, or endeavored to make his disciples believe, that he would die on the cross and rise again on the third day, was never claimed or pretended by himself, and is in irreconcilable conflict with the entire facts as they are reported in the gospels themselves. The supposition is not only in conflict with the entire pretensions and efforts of both Jesus and his disciples before the crucifixion, but with both their conduct and declarations afterwards. The idea of inserting these pre-declarations of his earthly fate into his previous life was clearly an after-thought, and was the result of the endeavor to remould the primary purposes, language and public conduct of Jesus into conformity with the subsequent facts, and with the remodelled conception of Jesus and his

mission which they necessitated. Their subsequent theory, that Jesus was a self-ordained sacrifice for human sins, through his death on the cross, compelled them to present him as having foreknown and intended the results which actually occurred. To do this, they had to represent him as pre-declaring them, and exhibiting his knowledge of what he had to go through. This, as we have seen, the makers and manipulators of the gospels would not hesitate to do,—nay, would consider it a service which it would be commendable to perform.

But, How stand the facts in this matter? Have we not shown, that the habitual purpose and hope of both Jesus and his apostles, during the whole latter half of his public career, were, that Jesus should temporarily triumph and reign as Messianic king over the Jews? It is absurd, indeed, to suppose that Jesus and his disciples made the efforts they did to secure his acceptance by the Jewish people alone, and to make him their king, and were so sorrowful and indignant at failures and opposition, when Jesus all the time contemplated and knew, and frequently and plainly told his disciples, that he should be rejected by the Jews, and suffer crucifixion for those very pretensions and efforts. If Jesus had as specifically and unequivocally told his disciples that their joint efforts were to end in his crucifixion, as it is now claimed that he did, it would have been quite impossible for all of those men to have either misunderstood or forgotten such a matter. The fact that he was to be crucified was one never to have been forgotten by those devoted servants, and was one which it was impossible for any one to have misunderstood; and so also

with the fact that he was to rise again from the dead on the third day. Nor would his disciples have continued to labor with him in a cause which they knew, or which he seriously informed them, would bring them, not only failure and trouble as its result, but also the crucifixion of their beloved leader.

But how stood matters at, and after, these events were supposed to have occurred? Do we find the disciples expecting these pre-announced results, or even reminded of their pre-announcement by their successive occurrence? Does either their conduct or declarations prove consistent with the fact of their having been pre-assured of their coming to pass? Does the language of Jesus himself to his disciples when he again met them, justify any such conclusion? No. To the contrary we find his disciples utterly astounded at the unsuccessful and fatal termination of his past pretensions and schemes. Instead of finding them anticipating his resurrection on the third day, we find them buying spices and preparing to bury him that very day, without a thought or hope of ever seeing him again. We find that, even after they were repeatedly told that he was out and alive by those who had conversed with him, they could not make up their minds to believe it. The fact was so unexpected that, on hearing it, they regarded it as an idle tale. And even to the last, when he met them in Galilee by appointment, "Some doubted." Is it possible that all these men could have so acted, if their master had repeatedly and plainly told them that these identical things were to happen? Are we to suppose that all these men were stark idiots?

But again : What were the declarations of these men themselves ? The two disciples who walked and conversed with Jesus about himself, without knowing him, informed him that Jesus was a mighty " prophet," whom the Jewish rulers had caused to be condemned and crucified. The disciple then continues to say—" But *we trusted* that it had been he which *should have* redeemed *Israel* : and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company *made us astonished*, which were early at the sepulchre : And when they found not the body, they came, saying, that they had seen a vision of angels, which said he was alive."

Here we have just what the disciples thought of Jesus and of his real purposes prior to his crucifixion, and *before* they had been re-indoctrinated at all. They regarded him as a mere man—a mighty *prophet*, and *had trusted*, until his death had destroyed all hope, that he was the one who "*should have*" redeemed,—not sinners or the world generally, but *Israel*. There was no thought of his having been anything else than a redeemer of *Israel*—no thought of his being a God or a divine vicarious sacrifice for human sins, or of there being any further hope after he was crucified. The only effect which the report of his being alive had upon them, was to make them "astonished." Are these facts at all consistent with the fact that these men had been repeatedly and plainly pre-informed of the fact and manner of his death, and of his resurrection on the third day, and of the consequent impossibility of his being what they "had trusted" he was to be, up to the last ?

What is John's explanation of the matter? He and Peter, disbelieving the women's story, went to the sepulchre to see for themselves ; and when they found matters as we have stated, we are told that John *believed*, and it is then added—"For *as yet* they *knew not* the *scripture*, that he must arise from the dead." Here is proof that even the "beloved disciple" and the "chief of the apostles," required ocular proof to convince them that he was not still in the sepulchre. And here, also, is the positive declaration, that they never had heard of any scripture that the Messiah was to rise from the dead ; as well as the implied declaration or admission that they had never heard of any such thing from Jesus himself ; since the very fact that their ignorance and incredulity is accounted for by the excuse, that "as yet" they had not learned that the *scripture* foretold the resurrection, shows that the scriptures were the *only* source from which there could be any pretence of their having learned it—shows, indeed, that the idea of their having been directly or verbally informed of it, had never been thought of.

Mr. Beecher says of the disciples at this time, that "They believed in an earthly kingdom for the Messiah, and, with the rest of their people, anticipated a carnal triumph of the Jews over all their enemies. They could not be made to understand that their master was to be put to death ; and when he was arrested they all forsook him and fled. They hovered in bewilderment around the solemn tragedy, etc." Can it be, that such a man as Mr. Beecher can believe this of the apostles, and yet believe that they had been told of such unmistakable facts as the death and resurrection of a man, and as often

and as unmistakably told as they are asserted to have been in the gospels—as plainly and unmistakably, for example, as the following language would show : “ While they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, the Son of man *shall be betrayed* into the hands of man : And they *shall kill him*, and the *third day he shall be raised again*. And *they were exceeding sorry* ”—(Matt. xvii. 22, 23) ? How could anybody, outside of an idiot asylum, mistake such language ? And How *could* they be “ exceeding sorry ” if they did *not* understand him ? No : it will not do to attempt to shield the gospels and Jesus and the Christian theory by making the apostles idiots ; for here is language which any ordinary idiot *would* understand, and which the gospel confesses they *did* understand and sorrowed over. The fact is, that the disciples had never been told any such thing ; nor was any such thing known by Jesus, as the language and conduct of the whole of them clearly prove.

It is true, that Jesus spoke rebukingly to his disciples for their lack of faith, as was his custom whenever they failed to do or think as he wished ; but he had not the hardihood to charge them with lack of faith in anything that he *had said*, but only with lack of faith in what the scriptures had said. He speaks of the matter twice. The first time was when he was going to Emmaus,—when he said, “ O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the *prophets* have spoken : *ought not* Christ to have *suffered these things*, and to have entered into his glory.” And he then went on to expound the scriptures to them. When he first met all his disciples together, Luke reports him as saying, “ These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was with you,

that *all things* must be *fulfilled*, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the *scriptures*." Here, and here only, he is reported as referring to what he had formerly told them ; and here he not only does not intimate that he had told them of the facts, but raises a conclusive presumption that he had not. What was it he professes to have told them ?—that he was to be crucified or to resurrect ? No. He simply reminds them that he had told them, generally, that *all* the things, of every kind, which the law, the prophets and the psalms had said about him—as the Christ—would be fulfilled ; and he *then* went on to specifically show them what these scriptures said and meant as to the death and resurrection of the Christ, without ever intimating that he had ever before told them what even the scriptures had said on these special matters, much less claiming that he himself had pre-announced to them the very facts themselves. And yet, Can there be a doubt that, if he had really and specifically told them in the language quoted from Matthew, and they were still incredulous, he *would* have then referred to what he had formerly told them, and to the very times and places that he had said it ?

When the whole facts are fully and fairly analyzed, compared and understood, the conclusion is resistless, that neither Jesus nor his disciples anticipated any such results to their schemes and labors. It was only after his rejection, failure, punishment and re-appearance,—only, also, when he dared not tell his disciples the real

facts as to his recovery from his punishment, that we find him driven, in lieu of explaining Why and How he was still alive, to go into long disquisitions on matters recited in the "law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms," to convince these ignorant, illiterate and confiding men, that the whole thing was scriptural, and "ought" to have happened to the Christ; and to satisfy their hopes by assuring them of his almost immediate and triumphant second coming! Here, in the sheer necessities of the situation, commenced that reconstruction of the conception of the Jewish Messiah, and that entire change of the idea of the nature of Jesus and of his mission and purpose, which converted his unsuccessful efforts for a Jewish throne and his partial crucifixion for treason and his natural recovery from his punishment and his secret escape, into a divinely ordained and prophetically foretold process of slaying the "lamb of God" for the "sins of the world:"—a change which remodelled the Jewish Jehovah into a tri-personal God, and injected this condemned Nazarene carpenter, body and soul, into this triple Godhead!

"Great God on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!"

Having divested this so-called resurrection of the factitious support furnished by its pretended prophetic annunciations by Jesus himself, we will consider, a little

more closely, a special series of apparently side-performances, whose actors, although unobtrusive, unannounced and unapplauded, seem to emerge from the side-wings of the stage at every act of the drama, and noiselessly shift the scenes and manage the entire machinery of the play. These facts are as conclusive in their nature as the facts of his disguise and flight, and, like those facts, have that singularity and apparent unaccountableness which can find their only explanation in the true theory of the facts.

While the disciples were preparing to bury Jesus, without the slightest belief in his divinity or in his resurrection or reappearance, there were two men, at least, who not only believed, but *knew* that he *would* reappear, and whose conduct throughout is conclusive proof, not only that he would reappear alive, but that he had never been dead. When Jesus was crucified, his clothes were taken ; and when he was placed in the sepulchre he had no clothing save the linen cloth and napkin which were wrapped round his body and head, respectively. By one account it would seem that the Magdalene discovered him while he was yet in his grave-clothes. This was just before daylight. When he was first recognized, a few minutes later, he had put on strange clothing, suitable for a gardener. The great stone had been moved from the door of the sepulchre when they first visited it. There were two men there besides Jesus. These men not only knew that he was

alive, but announced that fact to his friends before daylight, and delivered to them the message and commands of Jesus to his disciples, and showed themselves to be conversant with the whole facts and with the wishes and purposes of Jesus, and to be his agents and mouth-pieces in the whole affair. Let any person, still amenable to reason, candidly ask and answer to themselves the following questions, in the presence of the whole facts connecting these two men with this entire drama, namely :

1. Who were those two men, who were thus cognizant of, and thus controlling, these secret, mysterious and night-shrouded events? Were they the same two men whom Jesus had induced the disciples to believe to have been Moses and Elias, when they came to Galilee and secretly met him at night on a mountain? Were these the secret coadjutors of Jesus and members of the Sanhedrim who furnished him with information of the secret purposes and movements of the Jewish rulers and of the intended treachery of Judas, and who sent him the consoling messenger in Gethsemane? Were these the men who stood his friends at his trial before the Sanhedrim, and before his crucifixion, and while on the cross, and when taken to the sepulchre of one of them? Are these the same two men,—always true but always secret, now continuing to secure and manage his escape and flight? It appears that the *two* women despaired of being able to roll the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and perhaps even *one* man could not; and it is conceded by the Gospels that Jesus, instead of rising through the very rock itself or rolling away the stone by a word, like a God, *had to wait* until the rock was re-

moved for him: What two men, then, removed that rock? Who dared intermeddle with that sepulchre, save Joseph of Arimathea, to whom both it and the body belonged—seeing that the disciples had neither intermeddled with, nor approached it?

2. Whoever these two men might have been, the question again is—Why were they at the tomb of Jesus, outside of the city gates, just before day and “when it was yet dark,” and on that particular night of all other nights? Can any conceivable motive or reason be assigned for their opportune presence at such an hour and such a place, on that special night, upon the supposition that Jesus was a genuine corpse, and already prepared and ready for burial, and when he was to be buried by his old disciples?

3. Were they there to furnish the clothes and the means of that disguise which we have seen Jesus afterwards exhibit, and of enabling him to get out of the sepulchre and reappear in that “*other form*” which Mark tells us about?

4. Can any possible hypothesis account for their presence there at such a time and under such circumstances, and for their having such secret knowledge of the secret purposes of Jesus, and their acting as his spokesmen to his own disciples, which does not also involve the facts that they were designedly there as the trusted friends and helpers of Jesus, and that they *knew* that he was alive *before* they came, and came *because* they knew it? Otherwise, What right or What motive

could they have had to come there at all,—much more at such an hour and on this special occasion? Or Why take out, at night, a *live man's* clothing to a *corpse* that was already clothed for burial? Why did they assume to act for Jesus, and without telling the disciples who they were, or giving them a word of explanation as to how or when they came there, or why they were there at all, or why they were concerned in the matter at all? Can this state of facts be even forced into consistency with any possible theory, save one based on their previous knowledge that he was alive and of their being there to aid him in his escape? Jesus *was helped* out of the sepulchre, *was* furnished *new clothes* and the means of disguisement, and *whoever* did it *must have known that he was alive*, and have come prepared and on purpose to render him these services.

5. If these men must have known, and did know, that he was alive before they came that night, How and When did they learn it? They would not go, without any motive, and open a private sepulchre containing a corpse, and much less on the sabbath day; and had they done so and found him alive, it would have been equally fatal to the Christian theory; since he was to remain dead until the third day, according to that theory. They must, therefore, have known it prior to the sabbath, and that would place their knowledge of the fact to a period before sundown on the day he was executed. And this would conclusively show both the fact of continued life, and that these men must have been Joseph and Nicodemus:—just what we have contended for. It would seem utterly impossible for any

fair mind to reflect upon the entire series of facts and considerations mentioned, and view them in relation with the whole facts, and yet fail to perceive that Jesus was not only assisted, secretly and at night, by secret and trusted friends, but that his exit from the sepulchre that night had been pre-arranged and provided for by the two men who were actually helping him and acting for him when his disciples first came; and that these men were Joseph and Nicodemus,—who had had control of both him and the sepulchre, and who knew that he was alive even when he was first placed there. These men were undoubtedly the only men of distinction who had been concerned in the Messianic schemes of Jesus, and they, only in the most guarded and secret way. They proved sagacious and loyal friends to Jesus until they secured his final escape. That once accomplished, they disappear from the New Testament history. Through all the excitement about his resurrection, even in the Pentecostal times, they seem not to have been at all impressed by the fiery annunciations of the divine resurrection of their friend. By the gospel accounts we would be led to suppose, that Joseph and Nicodemus took him to Joseph's sepulchre and there left him, without ever again going to see, or even ever inquiring, what had become of him, or ever paying the slightest attention to all the flaming stories about his resurrection. Such a sudden and continued silence and such a strange abandonment of the body under their charge, are utterly incomprehensible on the Christian theory. Our theory, however, throws their whole conduct and motives into one continuous congruity, and shows us very plainly why these secret friends of Jesus,

who were behind the curtain, were unmoved by all the fiery annunciations of the divine resurrection and Godhood of Jesus. They had no need to be informed about what occurred in or about that sepulchre by Peter and Stephen,—who were *not* there, and did *not* know. They were quite satisfied for *others* to believe them. They evidently had some private theory of their own about the matter which was satisfactory to themselves, and, seeing that the whole affair was drifting in quite a safe and desirable direction, they silently let it drift; glad to have thus escaped.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BLACK CURTAIN FALLS.

HAVING considered the evidence touching the recovery, disguise, escape, after-conduct, after-explanations and flight of Jesus, and the opinion which his disciples entertained of him and of his pretensions and purposes, prior to their being re-indoctrinated after his supposed resurrection from death, we may now direct our attention to the closing scene of this gospel drama, and determine whether there was an exit to heaven of the chief actor, or whether the curtain fell while he was still upon the stage of mundane life.

And here, if nowhere else, we have a right to expect to be furnished with unequivocal evidence and clear details, as well as concordant accounts in all the gospels. Before their separation from Jesus, the great body of his disciples had been thoroughly drilled into the belief of his actual resurrection from death, and were prepared to recognize his divine nature as its legitimate consequence, and, consequently, felt bound to implicitly credit his exegetical representations of the Scriptural Christ. They would have looked to, and have known that other believers would look to, the final exit of this now accred-

ited God with the profoundest interest. And, as they would all probably witness it, there would be every reason to expect a graphic and concordant description of the wonderful event.

We have a right, also, to expect, that here, if nowhere else, Jesus would have manifested his divinity by the most unmistakable proofs, and in the manner most calculated to justify the faith of his followers and to secure the faith of others. If it could be said of the time of his resurrection, that then, if never before, there was every and unrestrained motive for the most public, decisive and efficient demonstration of his Godhood, how much more indisputably it might be said of the time of his final ascension or departure from Earth? Surely this unrestrained and final earthly act and proof of his Godhood would be made public, resistless, and indelible. If the mere place and publicity of an already intended act or even the costless display of power would justify his faithful followers before the world, would save the life of the devoted Stephen and the lives of countless other martyrs, and save the incredulity and consequent damnation of countless millions of those he had come to save, surely he would not finally disregard these potent and palpable considerations. If he had already determined to bodily ascend up into the sky, should we not expect, at least, that he would have consented to perform that act publicly, and in a convincing and beneficent manner—that he would, for example, have ascended in broad daylight, in the full sight of all Jerusalem, from the summit of the Temple, under the convoy of his “forty legions of angels,” and have caused the

old Jewish altar of sacrifice, which had reeked for so many centuries with the blood of innocent victims, to crumble into dust as the new and accepted divine sacrifice ascended to Heaven to lay his offering before the throne of his Divine Father? Here, at least, in his final ascension, he would certainly exempt the Jews and all other men from being compelled to depend for their salvation upon their belief in facts solely depending upon the "say-so" of his own blindly obedient followers, and credulous and trained witnesses; and would forever silence the possibility of a suspicion of mistake, incompetence or collusion in the witnesses, or of trickery or deception by himself. With these natural and legitimate expectations as to this Divine Saviour of the World, let us proceed to review the realities.

It is manifest to every unbiased and informed mind, that mere vague or conflicting reports of Jesus having bodily ascended into Heaven, which might have been found circulating among the credulous early Christians many years after the supposed event, would be entitled to no credit. After he was once apotheosized, such a mythic conclusion was certain to be reached, sooner or later. It is still more certain that, had any such event actually occurred, it would have been remembered, in its minutest details, by all who saw it, to the last day of their lives, and the day would have been held sacred through all generations. Such a stupendous exhibition of divine power would necessarily have formed a part of every

sermon, and have found the foremost place, among so many other petty details, in all the gospels, and be recited with all the minuteness its importance would demand. If, on the contrary, the story were not a reality, but a legend, of after and mythic growth, we should expect it to be more vague and general, less natural and coherent, most probably told by only a part of the gospels, and told differently by those that did record it. We should probably find more or less conflict as to details, and especially those as to time and place, there being no actual facts to determine and control these details. We should expect to find evidences of progressive mythic growth, if the accounts were written at different times,—a growth from the vague and general to the more definite and particular.

Now, when we examine the gospels on this momentous point, we find exactly what we did not expect, and nothing which we had a right to expect—find precisely that state of facts which we ought not, and could not, have found if Jesus were a Divine Saviour and did actually ascend to Heaven, and precisely what might have been expected if the story were a myth and Jesus were a mere escaping and fugitive man. The ascension is mentioned in but two of the gospels. This, in itself, is wholly incompatible with a belief in the actual existence of such a fact. For such a fact could neither be forgotten nor ignored. The two accounts which are given are so conflicting as to be mutually destructive, and constitute, in themselves, proof that no such event actually occurred—the time and place even being different. And the first of these accounts does not state or

imply, or intend to imply, a visible bodily ascension, even if we consider the first as doing so. The two other gospels not only do not even mention this most Godlike manifestation of power of all his pretended miracles, but they positively prove that it never existed. And, taking the orthodox view of the authorship of the gospels, we at once perceive, to begin with, that, if we even concede its assertion by Mark and Luke, we have their mutual contradictions, their total personal ignorance of the facts, the complete indicia of falsehood which their own recitals furnish, and the entire weight of the testimony of the two eye-witnesses, Matthew and John, and much more even, to rebut and overthrow their statements. And to all this may be added the moral impossibility of such an ascension as is suggested, having been made by a divine person with the professed objects of Jesus.

We first find the ascension mentioned in Mark, who was probably the first, also, to mention it. After reciting the secret meeting of Jesus with the "Eleven" on the first night after his reappearance, Mark says that, before he parted from his disciples, he spoke to them of their future course and instructed them what to do, etc., and then adds, "*So then*, after the Lord had spoken to them, he was *received* up into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God." Thus he ends the earthly career of Jesus with this first meeting with his apostles and within less than twenty-four hours after he arose, and makes

him ascend to Heaven from Jerusalem, at night, and just after finishing his instructions to the disciples.

It was not even intended by Mark that this should be taken as a recital of *observed facts*. He merely states his own supposition or general conclusion as to what he supposed must have been the fact, in the dogmatic manner common to the gospels. Had he been preaching the funeral sermon of St. Stephen, he would have used substantially the same language. Any Evangelist then, or preacher now, would say—"Our beloved brother finished his earthly labors on last Monday night, and was received up into Heaven, where he now sitteth on the right hand of God," of any pious Christian who had died in the faith. But neither here, nor in the case of Mark, would it be intended to intimate that the person was *seen* ascending to Heaven. And in this case it would have been impossible for the disciples to have seen him ascend even into the sky, for they were hidden in a house, with closed doors, and he could not have been seen going up further than the ceiling. Mark means this going up to Heaven, and asserts it, just as he means and asserts that, when he got to Heaven, he seated himself on the *right hand* of God; and yet he certainly never meant to intimate that the disciples saw Heaven, or saw Jesus sitting on the right hand of God. He merely states the whole as a matter of faith and belief. Knowing nothing further of Jesus, Mark simply concluded that, of course, he had gone back to Heaven, since he had no further business on Earth; and that, equally of course, he would have the post of honor in Heaven—the right of the throne. Had there been a visible ascension he would have described it, and have

told that they saw it, and how he went up; and not merely have said, generally, that he was *received* up into Heaven. In fact, Mark's statement, instead of confirming the fact of a visible and observed bodily ascension, is conclusive of the fact that he himself had never heard of any such ascension.

This general suggestion of his having ascended bodily into Heaven was certain to have arisen. None of the apostles, unless it were Paul, knew what had finally become of Jesus after his supposed resurrection. Without dying again, he finally parted from them, and disappeared; and they may very naturally have concluded that he had gone back to Heaven. But such a suggestion, once started, would inevitably tend to assert itself as an observed fact, and to ultimately define itself as to time, place and circumstances. In other words, the myth would grow. And accordingly we find the story clearly grows under the kindly hands of Luke—the especial evangelist of myths. He not only ventures to hint a visible ascension in his gospel, but has almost watered and nurtured it into life by the time he wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The only pretence for claiming an observed ascension, indeed, rests solely upon the recitals of Luke, and even they do not fairly and clearly assert it. In his gospel he agrees with Mark that Jesus ended his earthly career on the night following his resurrection, and that, during the darkness of that night, he ascended to Heaven. Here, however, the agreement ends and the conflict begins. Instead of having Jesus ascend from the secret retreat of the disciples, in Jerusalem, after he had finished his instructions, as Mark

has him, he says that Jesus went to Bethany that same night, and took his disciples with him. He then tells us that, having reached Bethany (with every nook and corner of which he was familiar), he lifted up his hands to bless his disciples; and that "*it came to pass, while* he blessed them, he was *parted* from them, and carried up into Heaven." These words constitute the sole basis for the assumption that the gospels assert a visible and witnessed bodily ascension. But, Will these words support any such assumption? Luke does not intimate that any one saw him ascend, but the fair inference is to the contrary,—whatever Luke may have hoped that inference would be. Had they seen him ascend, that fact would certainly have been stated; but it is not. He merely says that he was "parted" from them "while" he was in the act of blessing them, and then asserts that he was "carried" up into Heaven. He does not say how he was parted from them or how he was carried to Heaven, or that any one *saw* either his parting or carrying up. The time that was selected for separating from them was that precise moment when the disciples were solemnly absorbed with the "blessing," and when they would be least likely to have seen so sudden a disappearance; and Luke does not make the separation *consist* of his being taken up to Heaven, but asserts the separation, and then asserts the taking up as a separate fact. And the very fact that Luke does not state the *act* of separation, but merely states the *fact* that he "*was separated*," shows that they did not know in what manner he had disappeared, but simply the fact that he *had* disappeared, and disappeared *while* the disciples were least expecting it and were absorbed

by other thoughts and surrounded by the solemn darkness of the night. Can this be called even a statement, much less any evidence, of a bodily ascension of Jesus, *seen* by his apostles? If Jesus, for any purpose, had desired to part with his disciples in this sudden and unobserved manner, he could have selected no better method than to take them to this familiar spot, in the night, and, while he had them unsuspectingly and reverently looking up, or with their eyes reverently closed to receive his blessing, to have suddenly slipped behind some concealing object and noiselessly glided off in the night. Such an event would meet Luke's statement fully, except the subsequent *conclusion* that, as he never appeared again on Earth he must have been taken up to Heaven. Such an occurrence, however, would have been told just in this style by Luke,—the final conclusion and all.

By the time Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles, two things had happened: the germ of this myth had begun to grow in the mind of Luke, but, unfortunately, he had also learned the fact that Jesus could not possibly have ascended on that night at all. He had learned that Jesus had been meeting with his disciples long after the time he had asserted in his Gospel that he ascended into Heaven. Behold the result, and take a lesson in Christian adaptation and myth-moulding! Does Luke confess and abandon his error, when he found the asserted fact to have been impossible? Or, Does he ignore these new and delightful evidences of the fact of the "*resurrection*," because of their incompatibility with his equally delightful and growing myth of the "*ascension*?" Not at all.

On the contrary, he magnifies both. He now tells us, in his first chapter, that, instead of Jesus leaving the Earth the first night after his resurrection, he remained and was seen by his disciples for "forty days" after he arose. He then tells us an enlarged and altered story of the ascension. But, lest the juxtaposition, in the same book, of two such contradictory statements should expose and destroy both, he leaves out the *time* and *place* of the ascension altogether, so that, for all that appears, it might have been on the noon or the night of the fortieth day, and have occurred at Jericho or Beersheba. No rational mind can be imposed upon by such palpable myth-making and trickery as this. And, did the matter require it, it could be very clearly shown that, even in this last statement, Luke does not directly affirm that any one saw him rise into Heaven, or say anything which necessarily implies it. He evidently still hesitated to directly affirm what he was willing or desirous for others to infer. Luke knew nothing of the matters about which he wrote, and was clearly misinformed as to the whole course of the occurrences after the resurrection. For he never takes either Jesus or the disciples into Galilee at all, after that event; nor does he mention the fact that Jesus sent them word or orders to meet him there; but, to the contrary of all this, he says that Jesus *instructed* them to *remain in Ferusalem* and that they *did* so remain.

John and Matthew, who were personally present through it all, set this whole account of Luke aside,—

the ascension and all. They tell us that Jesus appointed to meet them in Galilee, on the first morning he reappeared, and that both he and they actually went to Galilee; and that he met the disciples there and instructed them, while Luke had them still kept in Jerusalem by express command, and long after he had sent Jesus to Heaven. Unless both these men grossly lied, then, Luke must have been misinformed as to all these facts, including that of the ascension. Neither of these men, who saw him latest, pretend that he either died again after his resurrection or that he left the Earth in any manner. The last they knew or recorded of him, he was in full life, and as likely to live out his "threescore and ten years" as the best of them; although he was compelled to spend them unknown and in another land. The last meeting they each record was in Galilee, and there they both leave him, in full life and vigor. The divinity of Jesus and his pretended resurrection, then, can borrow neither light nor aid from this gross but feeble attempt of Luke to produce the belief that he bodily and visibly ascended into Heaven on the night after his alleged resurrection. Such a scene, indeed, as Luke would have us believe, would be morally impossible to an Incarnate God that was ascending to Heaven after having finished such a mission as is claimed for Jesus. Such a tricky sneaking from the Earth and even from his own disciples, under cover of night, and while he was pretending to bless them, would be physically impossible to man and morally impossible to God:—man *couldn't* ascend, and God *wouldn't* ascend in *such a way*.

There having been no heavenly exit of the hero of the Gospel drama, Was there an exit at all? No. The black curtain falls upon the closing drama and hides the chief actor from our sight, almost while he is yet speaking. We are not, indeed, wholly without evidence suggestive of his having reappeared, in a new character and guise, in the "after-piece." The scriptural record of Paul, when thoughtfully examined in connection with the real facts, leaves a suspicion, if no more, that he was secretly connected with Jesus after his final flight from Palestine. Paul claimed to have seen a brilliant light shine about him and to have heard a voice, in going, with others, to Damascus. The story is told several times, but never twice alike, even by Paul himself. But upon one point the evidence is positive and concordant, namely: that Paul did *not see* Jesus or the person who spoke, at *that* time. His only information as to its being Jesus was derived through the voice—a voice which he himself admits, not one of those who were with him ever heard at all—(Acts xxii. 9). If he ever *saw* Jesus, therefore, it was after this event. It is said, that a disciple of Jesus, named Ananias, was directed by the Lord to go to Paul; and in the twenty-second chapter of Acts, Paul tells us that this messenger of the Lord said to him—"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and *see* the Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his *mouth*. For thou shalt be his *witness* unto all men of what thou hast *seen and heard*." The plain and unequivocal meaning and import of this communication was, that Paul should see and converse with Jesus personally, that he might be an eye and ear-witness to the fact of his resurrection and to the Gospel

with which Jesus would entrust him. The language is so specific as to clearly indicate a purpose to exclude any miraculous voice or communication. And again: in first Corinthians (ix. 1) Paul says: "Am I not an Apostle? Am I not *free*? Have I not *seen Jesus*." And again: he says (Gal. i., ii.), that he had been chosen by God to preach Jesus to the heathen; and he vigorously asserts, that he had been dependent upon *no man* for his Gospel or his instructions. He says that, after his conversion, instead of going up to the old disciples at Jerusalem, from Damascus, he went into Arabia, and from there returned to Damascus, and that he then remained three years before he returned to Jerusalem and first saw the old Apostles. He openly claims to have been independently commissioned to preach a special Gospel to the Gentiles, as Peter had been to preach the other Gospel to the Jews; and he stoutly contends for the originality, independence and equality of both his own apostleship and his own gospel; and as stoutly denies that he had either owed anything or yielded anything to the old apostles. Now, as Paul had an original and independent Gospel, specially adapted to the Gentiles, and had not received that gospel, or his commission, or his instructions, or his knowledge of the life and doctrines of Jesus from the apostles, from whom did he receive them? Must he not indeed have seen and conferred with Jesus in the flesh, before he left the Earth? He says he saw Jesus, and yet he says he did *not* see him on his way to Damascus. When and Where, then, did Paul *see* Jesus and hear from his own "*mouth*" the gospel, facts and doctrines to which he was to bear witness, and which he preached? Why did he, instead

of going back to Jerusalem, take that unexplained wild-
goose flight into Arabia, and never go near one of the
apostles for years? *Query?* Did Jesus go, temporarily,
to Damascus on leaving Galilee, under an assumed name,
and there meet Paul; manage to convert him; take him
with him to his final destination among the Arabs—the
half-brothers of his race: and, while thus with him, in-
doctrinate him, and specially commission him to the
Gentiles with a modified gospel? Whatever were the
true facts underlying this Pauline mystery, let us leave
it with this *query*.

We have now made as clear an exposition as we have
been able to make of the essential features in the life,
character, pretensions and fortunes of the son of Joseph
and Mary, from the singularly imperfect, garbled and
unreliable accounts of them now found in our four Gos-
pels. And, with all due self-distrustfulness, we can but
think, that we have aided in solving the mystery which
the idealizing and mythic tendencies of past ages and
the ignorance, devotion and superstition of his followers
and worshippers have thrown around them. We surely
must have convinced every rational reader that Jesus was
a mere man, and one distinguished rather for his demo-
cratic sympathies, his unhappy fate, his singular escape,
and his strange, stupendous and beneficent influence upon
Humanity, than for any unparalleled qualities of his

nature, or for any extraordinary intelligence, morality or perfection of conduct. We think we have clearly shown, that whatever peculiar qualities and powers he actually possessed were natural to him as a man, and were by no means exceptional or unknown. We think we have rationally and satisfactorily shown, that his egotism and his unhappy delusion as to his being the Jewish Messiah and the fountain and source of physical and moral life and of divine pardon and regeneration, had their primary source in his ignorance and misconception of these natural qualities and powers and of the cause of diseases, and were successively fostered into life and vigor by the peculiar notions and excitements of his time and by his own peculiar nature, habits and circumstances. We think we have shown that he had not the slightest real grounds for supposing himself either a God, the son of a God, a miracle-worker, a Jewish Christ, a sin-offering, or a saviour of men—in the sense claimed. We think we have shown conclusively, that his entire active public career, after he proclaimed himself the Christ, was directly, and up to his final rejection, directed to the attainment of the Messianic throne of Israel; that he neither originally contemplated the failure of his Jewish efforts, nor the extension of those efforts to the eternal salvation of mankind, or beyond the Israelitish people and Messiahship, nor caused his disciples or any one else to suppose that he did so. We have shown that he failed in every thing he undertook, and both cursed and wept over his failures; and that his final triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the King of the Jews and its pitiful failure brought him to the cross. We have shown that his pretended execution on the cross was neither sufficient to endanger

life, nor intended to be so, but that he was aided to escape death on the cross, to recover in the sepulchre, and to escape alive from the sepulchre and flee the country in disguise. We have shown the necessity which impelled him to delude his disciples as to these facts, and to suffer them to believe that he actually arose from the dead, and to then convince them that it was a necessary and scripturally-predicted incident in the career of the prophesied Christ. We have shown how he succeeded in still convincing and controlling his disciples by reason of their belief in his actual resurrection from the dead and their consequent conviction that he was a God; and in making them believe that his death was a pre-determined and voluntary sacrifice for the sins of his disciples, or those who had faith in him; and that his resurrection from death was for their justification and for their assurance of immortality and eternal salvation; and how he induced them to believe that his Messianic reign was still certain and imminent, and that during that very generation he would *again* come in all his divine power and glory:—in short, how he convinced them, that his past failures were but the necessary and foretold prelude to his future triumph, and instructed them to go forth and preach these things to the world. We have shown, also, that the apotheosis which was won by his supposed resurrection, and the hopes which he inspired by his promises—promises which stood guaranteed by that resurrection and divinity, have induced his followers, throughout subsequent ages, to worship him as a God, and to idealize and mythically remould his lineage, his paternity, his nature, his conception, his birth, his life, his character, his motives, conduct and designs,

upon the models of a perfect man, of a Son of God and Divine Saviour who had voluntarily sacrificed himself for the sins of believers, as well as upon that, also, of the prophesied, but *spiritual* Christ and Redeemer of the Jews ; and that, in doing this, they have, in utter disregard of the real facts, adorned and divinely glorified his conception, embryonic life, birth, dedication, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, agony, punishment, resurrection, etc., with a series of mythic miracles and indicia which are as puerile and absurd as they were false and unreal ; and have endeavored to reconstruct the facts and records concerning him in such a way as to justify and sustain these new or *post-resurrection* dogmas and beliefs and the myths which they have engendered. And we think, finally, that we have sufficiently exposed the last feeble attempt to close his mythic, as well as his earthly career by a pretended bodily ascension into Heaven.

If, in reviewing these subjects, the constant and gross perversions and perversities which we have been compelled to deal with, have driven us, at any time, into a severity of either judgment or expression which has been unwarranted or uncalled-for, none could regret such an error more than ourself, or could more truthfully say that it has been unintentionally committed. The persistent endeavor has been to grasp the reality—the *very truth* of matters, and to judge all sides and parties with sympathetic justice and equity, and without prejudice, but

also without shrinking from a free and fearless vindication of the truth and right. For we not only regard Jesus as having been the initial point and nucleus of one of Earth's greatest and most beneficent movements, but have a most kindly sympathy for Jesus personally, as well as entertain many sympathies and repugnances in common with him. And we should be indeed sorry, if we had unfitted either our readers or ourself from now proceeding to part with him, in the last recorded scene in his known career, with all proper reverence for his real virtues, and with all due sympathy for his untoward fortunes, and all kindly hopes and wishes, projected back upon that unrecorded earthly career which still lay before him when he parted from his devoted followers.

Let us endeavor to mentally outline and gaze upon that last scene recorded in the last chapter of the last of the gospels. Time: early in the morning. Scene: a fishing smack lying some 200 cubits from a lonely bit of shore on the Galilean sea. On the shore is a fire, and on its coals are seen fish broiling, and bread lying near. We gaze upon the scene. We have no difficulty in recognizing the men in the fishing smack, being old acquaintances. The faces of Peter, and John, and James, and Thomas, and Nathaniel are clearly recognizable from the shore. They have been fishing. Through the night they had been unlucky, but are pre-

paring to cast their net again. The chief fisherman, as also chief apostle, is in command, and seems specially prepared for business ; the " Prince of the Apostles " is *naked* ; a fact readily comprehensible then, although now, it has become somewhat difficult to realize the fact of the predecessor of a Hildebrand, a Leo Tenth, or a Pio Nino, fishing naked before his cardinals or suffragan bishops !

Yes, we recognize these men and this nude predecessor of the Popes. But Who is this lone man sitting by his *bivouac* fire in this lonely spot on the shore, and broiling his fish for breakfast, like some wandering and fleeing outcast ? Can this be the Incarnate God who divinely rose from the dead some few weeks ago on Mount Calvary ? No ; this strange man has no recognizable personal resemblance to that person. Nor is it credible that, under the circumstances, he who had miraculously provided cooked-fish for thousands by his mere volition, would now seek this lonely spot, and catch, clean and cook fish for his own sustenance. Besides, What business could that divine person possibly have in *bivouacing* here and now, in disguise, in this lonely and secret spot, long after his divine mission and labors had been closed ? And, Did not that Incarnate God close his earthly career and ascend to Heaven, the very next night after he arose, at Jerusalem ?—nay, we mistake,—at Bethany ? Nay,—we must amend the whole,—Did he not meet his disciples, by appointment, in a mountain in Galilee, and there finally instruct and part from them,—neither of the parties expecting to ever meet again ? No, this cannot be that Incarnate

God whose earthly mission had thus been closed, who thus continues to purposely linger around the sea of Galilee, evidently avoiding the face and habitations of men, sleeping out at nights, and secretly fishing and cooking for his own sustenance—no—no, this is quite impossible.

But pause ! May not this still be a wanderer whom we know ? May it not be, that we have here that altogether human and unfortunate aspirant for the throne of Israel whom we have seen condemned and punished for conspiring to become “King of the Jews,”—he who did *not* rise from the dead and did *not* ascend into Heaven, but who escaped both death and Jerusalem, and fled in disguise into Galilee, and who secretly met with, and finally parted from, his disciples on some adjacent Galilean mount, in continued life and unabated vigor ? May not this be an accidental meeting ? May he not have lingered another night, or even a day and night, around the shores of that sea which had witnessed so many of his early successes and then hopeful endeavors, ere he parted from it forever ? Nothing would seem more probable : but we will await developments. One sign is hopeful. He evidently recognizes and is interested in these fishermen, and directs them where to cast their net. They do not recognize *him*. But this argues nothing, since *they* are *not* disguised, and *he is*. The net is cast, under this man’s directions, and with wonderful success. And by some association of ideas, doubtlessly with certain former and similar successful directions, the truth flashes upon the mind of John—it is his master ! Yes, it is Jesus ; still hiding and fleeing. And

now the impulsive Peter throws on his fishing garment, and, plunging into the water, swims ashore ; while the others follow in the small boat. They all meet and converse around the *bivouac* fire of their master, and prepare and eat their last meal of "fish and bread" together. But there is a strange constraint and reticence upon the part of all, and especially upon the most natural subjects of conversation. Knowing his desire for concealment, and his excessive dread of exposure, the disciples "*durst* not ask him" concerning himself, nor did Jesus refer to himself or to his own plans, past or future. They converse about the future of the disciples ; and Peter puts the last question. And with his master's answer to this question, the record of the career of Jesus finally closes ; and the black curtain falls, leaving him with this answer still upon his lips, himself well filled with "fish and bread," and in the prime of his life, health and vigor.

But while the record thus drops the curtain, May not the imagination, guided by almost necessary inferences, prolong at least this one scene to its close ? May we not imagine that silent, but last and profoundly sorrowful parting ; the ship sailing off on its return to Capernaum ; that lone wanderer standing on the shore gazing on its lessening and dimming sails ? Can we not imagine the anguish with which those devoted fishermen would turn and look back to that receding shore ? And, as the lonely and dimming figure faded out in the dis-

tance, May we not imagine Peter and John voicelessly gazing from the stern of their vessel, while convulsive sobs were swelling the bosom of the "beloved disciples," and tears were furrowing the weather-beaten face of the sturdy fisherman who had just been left to "feed his sheep?" But Who may say what were the thoughts of the lonely fugitive who was thus fading from their view, or whither he directed his steps when they, too, faded away in the distance? That he had never died, never risen from the dead, never ascended into Heaven, and that we finally part from him in his fullest prospect for continued life, and while using every precaution to escape death, without a hint from either him or his disciples of his anticipating an early departure from mortal life or any other departure save that by time and natural death, we already know; and thus knowing, we must anticipate for him many years of natural life. But what that future life would be, and in what land it would be spent, were matters necessarily to be kept in profound secrecy even from his disciples. His future career after he left Galilee, therefore, must ever remain buried in that silent domain of the Unrecorded, which has shrouded in oblivion the great mass of human actions and human destinies. May the sod rest lightly above his remains wherever they may lie.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONCLUSION.

MAN early forms the conception of divine beings, and still earlier forms the conception of an inner Self or Soul. It is long, however, before he even approximates a true conception of either. It is the unalterable tendency of man to believe in both, after he has attained a capacity for conceiving them. If there be a time in man's early history when he does not believe in either, it is a time so early that he is incapable of forming ideas upon such subjects. He is driven into the belief of them by the mental influences which compel their conception. Doubt and disbelief of them are of later growth, and are the offspring of Reason and Investigation. But this doubt and disbelief, although normal processes of mental progress, are not normal states in which man can rest. They are but the first steps in forcing a reconstruction of our immature conceptions ; and the same (and perhaps additional causes) that compelled our immature conceptions will compel a reconstruction of them. For these inseparable ideas of God and Soul are not only suggested and proved by the facts of Nature, but are nourished by the fundamental aspirations of the soul. The difficulty in this matter does not lay in the lack of belief in souls and Deities, but in man's incapacity,

hitherto, to form true or rational, or indeed any clear conception of them. As might have been expected, the God-ideas and religious creeds of the more developed races present a progressive formation, constructed by means of successive additions, patchings and remodelings. As the developing soul has found new needs and acquired deeper insight, rendering its old creeds too infantile and cramped for its accommodation, it has been driven into efforts at improvement until temporary accommodation was attained ; rather remodelling, however, than attempting to build anew. Thus far, Religion has made no determined and prolonged effort to reconstruct itself upon a rational basis, freed from the dogmas and influences born of super-naturalism. And, consequently, its achievements hitherto have been provisional and temporary—a successive series of modifications and changes, without rational hope of permanence. The entire framework of even our Christian Theology stands utterly condemned by Science and Reason, as the immature production of early ignorance and superstition. The doctrines of a creation by *fiat*, of man's fall and degeneracy, of written divine laws, of divinely-inspired men, prophecies and writings, of proving facts by miracles, of an incarnation of God, of a divine vicarious sacrifice for human sins, of eternal punishment, personal devils, and a local hell, of a local Heaven or "City of God," with its enthroned King, could never have been born of modern thought, and can find no support in modern knowledge or enlightened reason. The germs of truth which these false notions obscure rather than elucidate, are the real existence of God, the soul, and immortality.

But it may be asked—"Could an uninspired gospel and an uninspired Church have won such triumphs as Christianity has won? Has not the Church proved its pretensions by its successes? Certainly no success ever won by Christianity or its founder can even form an evidence, much less proof, of its supernatural origin. There is not a single influence it ever exerted, which may not be plainly traced to adequate natural causes, where the real facts are known.

Its influence upon the emotions, beliefs and conduct of individuals is certainly very marked in certain instances, but such influences are not more marked than their causes are simple and palpable. Let us merely glance at the nature and cause of some of its most striking personal effects. What occurs, for example, in the process of converting a sinner at one of our religious revivals? The first process of the revivalist is to get up a general state of emotional and sympathetic excitement which will utterly subordinate everything to the purpose in hand and sway and control the congregation. Secondly: he endeavors to produce "conviction," or an overwhelming sense of *guilt and fear*—a conviction of being utterly lost and undone, without divine aid and pardon. Thirdly: when the victim of this terrible conviction has exhausted himself in supplications for mercy, and approaches the point of despair, the light of hope is thrown full upon him; he is promised an immediate, free and full pardon and salvation the moment that he will have faith in Jesus, and in the promised pardon; and he is passionately exhorted to have absolute faith, to "give himself up" and trust all to God, who stands with

outstretched arms to receive him the moment he has entire faith in the promised salvation. The exhausted and despairing reprobate finally lets all holds go, and drops helplessly, but with an absolute faith in the divine assurances. Now, if this leap of Faith had been from a fourth story window, the pavement would have shaken it in an astonishing manner. But, as the whole matter is purely mental—is purely emotional and imaginative, the *fact* of pardon and salvation can never be tested or known, and can only be evidenced by the man's own mental feelings. Here, however, the facts are unequivocal. Having absolute faith that he *would* be pardoned, and *was* pardoned, he feels and acts exactly as he would were the whole matter the divinest reality. He feels all the relief from guilt and fear, and all the blessedness of a sense of salvation and of divine favor and reconciliation. His feelings, beliefs and conduct will correspond with his undoubting belief or faith as to the facts. Whether the facts are true or false is a matter of no difference, and can never be either proved or disproved. His absolute faith in their truth, however, makes them *true to his own mind*, even if they were false; and his feelings, beliefs and conduct will respond exactly in proportion to his faith. In its effects upon the believer himself, absolute faith in an unknowable fact is always identical with its reality. And this fact, in itself, very clearly accounts for the feelings and conduct of converts and for all the "internal evidences" of the religion of Jesus. The same religious excitement, ecstasies, convulsions and other physical or mental effects, and the same internal convictions of the truth of their religion, and the same willingness to suffer martyrdom for it which are

found among Christians, are also found among the votaries of other religions. There is no effect produced by Christianity, which cannot be paralleled or duplicated from other religions. Neither the supposed internal evidences of the truth of Christianity, nor its effects upon the feelings, belief or conduct, therefore, can furnish the slightest evidence of its supernatural origin or of the truth of its theology, even were they all that they are claimed to be.

The expansion and the acquisition of power and dominion by Christianity can, in like manner, have no tendency whatever to prove its special divine origin or truth. The extent of religious influences and movements are always incalculable, but always dependent upon natural causes and conditions. The man who can supply the special need, or furnish the necessary inspiration, required by the masses of mankind at any given stage of their development—who can shake the tree when the pear is ripe and ready to fall, is sure of success—of a success commensurate, not with his own worth or ability, but with the need or demand which he supplies. Guatama was a mendicant preacher like Jesus, and yet his success was far greater. Mahomet was a mere private and undistinguished citizen suffering from religious mania and mental hallucinations, and yet his religion supplanted that of Jesus in the entire region of its birth and early triumphs, and long threatened its utter extinction. The influence of the entire body of the statesmen

and warriors of our century will probably prove far less profound and prolonged than those of Mr. Wesley or Joseph Smith. The wholly *undivine* nature of such triumphs is also shown by the fact of the utter *failure* of Christianity to convert the Jews,—its prime object and effort. If success with the Gentiles could be regarded as at all presumptive of its divine origin, What shall we say of this persistent and signal *defeat*, this defeat, not only of Jesus before the Jews, but of Peter and his gospel to the Jews? What, indeed, shall we say of its utter failure to convert *any* people already possessed of an inspired religion and written divine laws, outside the Roman Empire where it had finally triumphed by the *sword* of Constantine?

In the highest sense, all the agencies by which man is developed and the progress of Humanity is secured, are divine. In this universal sense, and in no other, is the Christian Church and its records of divine origin. That it has been an inestimable comfort and blessing to millions of the human race is certain. That most of the races adopting it have made progress under, and often by, its influence, is not to be doubted ;—a progress often even exceptionally great. That it was a fit instrument, —nay, that it was the fittest and necessary instrument, for producing the special progress and results it has actually achieved, and which, in the divine economy and order of Nature, it was to achieve, is indubitably proved by the fact of its selection and success.

Like all other instruments of natural progress, Jesus and his followers were a success precisely because, and precisely to the extent, they were the right men, in the right times and places. But the precise same language may be properly used of Guatama, Mahomet, Luther or Wesley. There have been many religious successes besides those of Christianity, and will be others still. Each phase of religious growth must have its own form of manifestation and expression, and when the state and conditions demanding such advance and change arrives, the divine agencies of Nature for effecting them have already germinated; and in due time and order will consummate them to the pre-involved and determined extent. The Christian claim in this regard is based upon considerations substantially common to all successful religions from Fetichism to Mormonism. The mere fact of any agency having been actually used in the course of Evolution, is not the slightest evidence that it is founded on truth, or is good, in a *human* sense; while all are good in an absolute or irrelative and divine sense. The merest mistakes and sheerest lies of men are often the means of immeasurable good. Even the wickedness of men,—the “good book” tells us,—is made to “praise God.” The very fact of continued development and progress implies continued error and incompleteness. Nature’s means and processes are always exactly adequate to her ends, and, therefore, are complete and perfect *as means and processes*. Her products and results are always approximating nearer to her final aims, and are therefore never complete and perfect, save as means and processes to further products and results, or until some ultimate aim is reached. Man is quite unable to

determine either the completeness, perfection or goodness of Nature's "works." He only judges them relatively to himself and his own aspirations, desires and enjoyments. While Christianity, therefore, may be wholly divine and good as an instrument of natural evolution, and in an absolute sense, it by no means follows, that it has these gifts as special qualities or characteristics, or to the exclusion of other religions, or that it is divine or good in its own sense of divine and good. Christianity, indeed, triumphed as much because it was not final and true, and by its own imperfections, as by its suggestion of a higher range or degree of perfectness, and the supply of more pungent and efficient moral motives and higher assurances of immortality ; but not at all by the truth of its conceptions, assertions or pretensions. The truth would neither have been comprehended or efficient in the days of Jesus—would not now, with the great mass of our own people.

Had Jesus, as we have elsewhere suggested, written a truthful autobiography, as well as a complete and clearly comprehensible moral and doctrinal code, in which his real life, motives and opinions were truly reflected, and had accompanied them with an exact portrait of himself and his old Nazarene mother, where would Christianity have been now ? Is it not evident, that the book and the very memory of its author would have perished ? It is the very indefiniteness, uncertainty, mystery and suggestiveness which surround and

characterize both him, his life and his doctrines, and the unbounded promises and immeasurable hopes and fears with which they were burdened, that gave them that vigor and that elasticity and placidity which constituted their adaptability to human needs, and fitted them for a prolonged course of usefulness and success. They have been, and still are, "all things to all men." Each person of sufficient individuality to form opinions of his own, has continued to mould these shadowy and heterogeneous elements to suit his own mind and satisfy his own spiritual needs. The wonderful conglomerate furnished by the Christian traditions and writings furnished a new quarry for the formation of new ideals, and for remoulding and embodying old myths. Out of this many-hued and plastic mass of material individuals, sects and successive generations,—to use a homely simile,—have moulded and smoked their own pipes. The scenes, characters and events, mythic and real, in the New Testament and apocryphal Christian writings have furnished an almost exhaustless store of materials for the plastic labors of Art, and given loose rein to the creative faculties of the painter, the sculptor and the poet. There is scarce a hint to hamper their unbridled fancies in the whole writings. Each can improve upon the ideals and conceptions of his predecessors without restraint from the records. The whole affair has the rare attractiveness which belongs to the suggestive, the mysterious and unknowable.

Morally and doctrinally it was almost equally plastic. Diligence and a willing mind could discover some fragments or dubieties from which almost every one could

mould or warp into doctrines or creeds in conformity with their own notions or desires—into some shell or shelter for that hermit crab—the chrysalis Soul. There have arisen some thousand or more distinct schisms and sects in the Christian Church;—a number vastly excelling that of the sects of all other religions. To this we may add an almost countless variety of individual beliefs and interpretations. This conflict or diversity of opinion in regard to almost every important fact, doctrine and notion mentioned in the New Testament, has been deemed quite conclusive against the claims of Christianity. And, if it is simply deemed adverse to its claims to an exclusive divine origin and support, the conclusion is correct; if it is claimed, however, as a proof of the unfitness of Christianity as a divine instrument of Evolution, it is the very reverse of correct. This adaptability of Christianity and its continuous modification and change, from age to age, has been the true source of its prolonged success, and constitutes its surest voucher for its divine origin.

Besides possessing these general qualifications for an instrument of Evolution, there were many concurring causes and conditions favoring the success of Christianity—too many to be even mentioned here. Prior to the crucifixion, as we have seen, the disciples of Jesus had regarded him as a prophet, and hoped he might prove the temporal ruler and redeemer of Israel. When, however, these hopes were blasted by his failure and execution, they were overwhelmed with disappointment. His unexpected reappearance and supposed resurrection put a new face upon things, and there was a general overhauling and reconstruction of notions, opinions and

plans, under the limitations and necessities imposed by the new state of facts. There was little difficulty in inducing the credulous disciples to believe, that they, together with the balance of their race, had been mistaken as to the character and mission of the Christ of prophecy. Their old habits of implicit faith and obedience to their master was now supplemented by the new belief that he was a God ; and his declarations and interpretations of scripture were thenceforth considered as divine and authoritative ;—requiring the aid of neither fact nor reason. The new scheme of the speedy *second coming* of Jesus in all his divine power and glory, and the prospects of their own exaltation under his divine reign, set their souls ablaze with love, hope and faith. Could world-storming and Heaven-scaling be difficult for such men when backed by the power and promises of the Father and the intercessions of the Son, and when “filled with the Holy Ghost ?” Were they not ignorant and suffering men appealing to ignorant and suffering men in behalf of their own salvation ? and could they not kindle a fire upon the “altar of their hearts,” from the red-hot coals upon their own ? Were they not brim full of courage and faith ? and Did they not carry their own arsenals and forges with them to furnish or mend their shafts to penetrate all armors ? Were they not ready to be “all things to all men” for their very salvation’s sake ? Was there not triumph in the very outlook ? Did not an open ocean of Superstition spread out before them, upon which they could sail at pleasure with all their sails set ? Were there not vast harbors of Credulity where they could defy the storms of Reason ? Were there not great seas of Slavery, suffering, poverty, want and woe upon

which to sail, and a perfect universe of longing and discontent, to swell their sails? Were not they themselves from that multitudinous sub-stratum of Society where the wants of Humanity are nakedest and her hopes most immeasurable, and Could they not reach the heart of that Humanity to its very nethermost depths? Had they not both authority and example for sending Lazarus to Heaven and Dives to Hell, and for making the first last and the down-trodden millions first? Had they not all men bribed, in advance, by immeasurable hopes and fears, as well as nine-tenths of them by the addition of their prejudices against the rich and prosperous? And Were not the walls and defences of the old domain of Polytheism in such advanced decay as to invite their entry and possession? If philosophic books or men stood in their way, Might not the one be sent to the flames and the other to hell,—in the name of Jesus! If persecution or even death menaced them, Was there not a glorious resurrection and a martyr's crown to be hourly expected with the "second coming?" If their preaching was foolish, Was it not to be gloried in as the foolishness of God and salvation? Were not the husks and shards of old beliefs already dried and parched into a magazine of combustibles? and Was not this new-lit, fiery cross, reeking with divine blood and heralding immortal hopes and hell-hot fears, the very torch to set the old dry-rotted World aflame? Was not there cause to hearken and tremble? Was not the final arbiter of men's eternal bliss or eternal torment,—that Jesus who had risen from the dead,—even then stealing upon the world "like a thief in the night?" Were not the very generations to whom they bore his message doomed to

see the sun darkened, the moon turned to blood, the stars of heaven fall, the Earth consumed by unimaginable fire, and the heavens rolled up like a parch-scroll, as this terrible arbiter of all men's fate should come "in clouds and great glory" to separate the *redeemed believers* from the *lost and damned unbelievers*? Dared a world of Superstition stand unmoved in the presence of such stupendous responsibilities and consequences? Had not the time come when Paul might well say that God had "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things of the mighty: and base things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not to bring to naught things that are—?" Had not the time come when the "mud sills" should be lifted up, and the poor have the gospel preached, and immortality and crowns of glory awarded them "without money and without price?" Were it not also *worth while to believe*?

Had all the philosophers of the Roman Empire conspired to found a new religion, they would have produced less effect upon mankind than the single labors of that indomitable sail-maker of Tarsus with his divine message to the Gentiles. The religion of the one would have appealed to the reason of the intelligent few who were capable of forming or of judging opinions for themselves, and would have resulted in endless debate which would never have reached more than a tenth of the people.

The religion of the other came as a direct message from God, that permitted no question of its propriety or truth, but demanded acceptance and belief by its divine sanction and by every hope of reward and every fear of punishment which a sympathizing nature and fervid imagination could conceive for influencing the superstitious and down-trodden laborers, women and slaves to whom it was preached. It appealed to the *emotions* alone—those *true motors* of the soul. It planted itself in the fundamental life-aspiration of the human soul, and rooted itself in the perennial needs, hopes and desires of the masses of mankind—the very sub-soil from which all great evolutive agencies draw their nourishment and vigor. Paul and Nature were in accord in their immediate aims and means, but were widely divergent in their secondary or ulterior purposes. Each proposed to secure a belief in Christianity by the *most efficient* means:—Paul, with a view to secure the eternal salvation, in Heaven, of the believer:—Nature, with a view to secure the proper inspirations and restraints to insure man's further progress on Earth, as the only means of securing him endless psychical progress in intelligence and beatitude in the Hereafter. The temporary partnership of Paul and Nature proved a success:—as was most likely. They furnished the exact religion needed for the temporary purposes designed and actually subserved, and it of necessity triumphed.

As Evolution was the nurse, so will it be the sexton, of Christianity. The decay of this religion among the

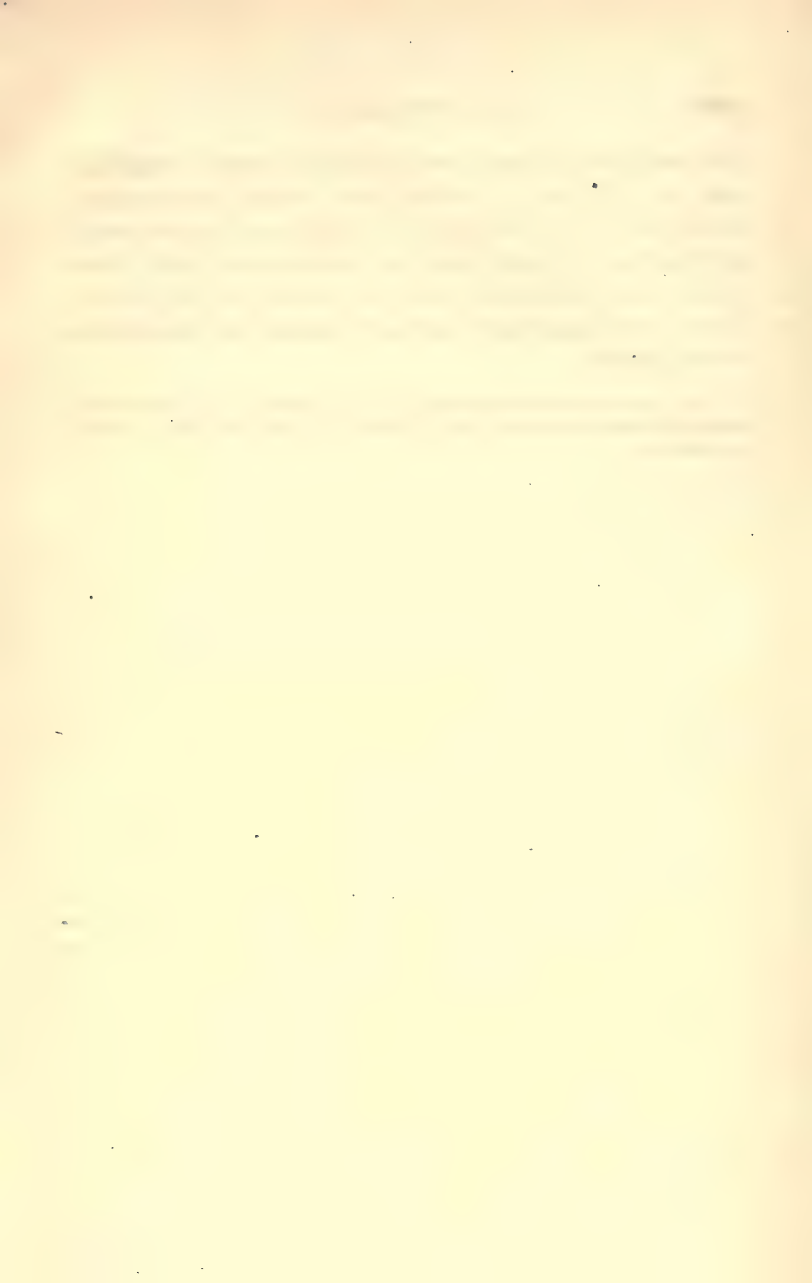
intelligent classes and among the laboring masses from which it sprung, is as certain, if not as rapid, as its rise. This decadence is as resistless as it is final. It has been of incalculable service to mankind, and still is, and may long continue to be, an inspiration and blessing to millions; but the hand of the Inevitable is upon it. Being a product and phase of Evolution it will merge into a higher phase. Its plasticity and adaptability have been indeed marvellous, but they have been stretched to their utmost. Every re-stretching is at the expense of its vigor and vitality as a supernatural religion, and can only result in an ever more transparent tenuity and in final rupture. Without the aid of supernaturalism it is but an empty shell—"sound and fury signifying nothing:" and the reign of Supernaturalism is closing. Christianity is dying at both top and root—among the bodily toilers and the brain toilers, and its hollow trunk has been invaded by Phariseeism and Mammon. This was inevitable—was a necessary result of its triumph. There is no warfare against it, and need be none. It still has numbers, power, and that wealth to which it panders. The terrors, and hopes and consolations it has supplied may long be required by the ignorant and undeveloped, and may furnish a basis for mystic ideals to even higher intelligences; while it will still continue to be a useful instrument of political parties and of the Plutocracy in educating, influencing and controlling the people; and it may still glory in its dominion;—but neither it, nor aught else earthly, can avoid that fatal decay from inanition and corruption which even Triumph itself brings, and which sooner or later comes to all instruments of progressive evolution, nor repress that

strange and expansive power of new growths which rends the very rocks with its fibrous touch. All forms of Supernaturalism are doomed—are provisional only. Men *grew into* Christianity, and they will *grow out of it*. The old shell of the young Chrysalis already feels the birth-throes from the coming of the new life within it; and, in its instinctive dread of dissolution, it feverishly puts forth unwonted efforts in this brief “Indian summer” of its waning life. The sun of the new day has not fully risen, but the morning sky is red with its coming!

To the true Theistic Evolutionist, in his philosophic moods, the final feverish efforts of the two poles of Christianity—Catholicism and Protestantism—to maintain the ascendancy of Supernaturalism and the Church, are subjects at once of mournful interest and of exultant hope. Like the sympathetic watcher of the “old year out and the new year in,” he can but whisper his ideas to the waning Cycle of Evolution with a sense of mysterious awe as he witnesses the feverish death-spasms and struggles for life of this last and mightiest of the past agencies of human progress, ere he turns to embrace the new heir of Hope and child God. Believing in the divinity of all Nature’s methods,—even in that of the grim death which gives possession to the new heirs of both men and Progress, he sympathizes with all, and touches every foot-print of the Divine Creative Intelligence with an unstinted and loving reverence. To him

the material or human and perishing forms it assumes and the agencies it evolves and adopts, in its march from Chaos towards Light and God, are of interest only as inestimable mementoes and evidences of that divine process of evolution of which all human life and history form a part, and which is ever bearing the soul up towards God.*

* The true conceptions of God and of the soul and its destiny, we have endeavored to establish in a work entitled the "Divine Problem :"—to which the Reader is respectfully referred.





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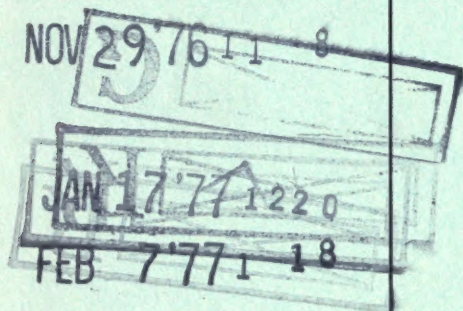
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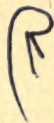
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